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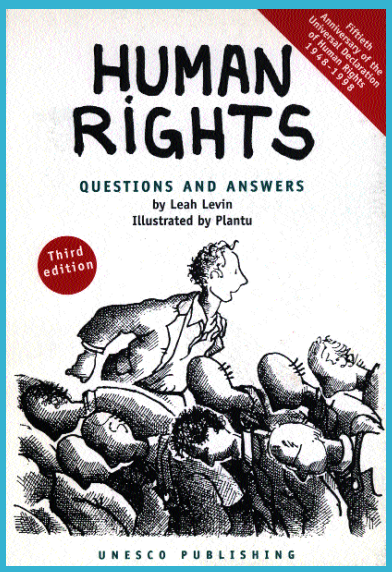

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They're watching you…

Privacy in a wired world

Each step forward in the field of new technologies marks a deeper intrusion into your privacy. This is the price we must supposedly pay for economic efficiency and security. But more and more people are rejecting the tradeoff and the rise of a high-tech surveillance society. In the battle to protect privacy, choose your weapon wisely: legislation, technological tools, activism, media and even humour… The choice is yours in shielding that intimate space—personal liberty—where neither government nor corporation has the right to tread.

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IN THIS ISSUE

The power of words

March 8 is International Women's Day, a stark reminder of the long road to be travelled before the two sexes share the same rights. In Kuwait, women are fighting for the right to vote (pp. 4-9).In Afghanistan,they are being humiliated by the Taliban. With words as her only weapon, the exiled writer Spôjmaï Zariâb has taken up their cause and denounced the nightmare imposed upon her people (pp. 47-51).It is also with words that young women—and men—belonging to the Otpor movement ("Resistance" in Serb) rocked the establishment to bring down the Milosevic dictatorship.

…and of technology

New technologies can serve the cause of freedom,but they are also chipping into our privacy and eroding our rights. Under the pretext of economic efficiency or security, our daily lives are too often placed under surveillance (pp.16-37). While these new technologies have enabled journalists to chronicle wars in real time, they have not always been to truth's advantage (pp. 44-46). Technologies are also a formidable arm for book pirates, who are making a dent in authors' royalties while putting cheap quality works on the market (pp. 41-43). They are omnipresent in Canadian schools, although their impact on learning is yet to be gauged (pp.13-15).And their unbridled use is contributing to global warming, killing off coral reefs, one of the world's greatest underwater riches (pp. 10-12).

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All roads l
the franchi

On a shopping spree in Kuwait City.

ead to se

PHOTOS BY ISABELLE ESHRAGHI, TEXT BY HAYA AL-MUGHNI

ISABELLE ESHRAGHI IS A FRENCH PHOTOGRAPHER.
HAYA AL-MUGHNI IS A KUWAITI SOCIOLOGIST AND AUTHOR OF
WOMEN IN KUWAIT: THE POLITICS OF GENDER (LONDON: SAQI BOOKS, 2001).

© Isabelle Eshraghi/Vu, Paris

Since the end of the Gulf War, Kuwaiti women have stepped up their campaign for the right to vote. Even the most ardent Islamist activists espouse the cause, touting a different vision of women's role in Muslim society

Fifty years ago, few Kuwaiti women received more than a basic religious education. Those from wealthy households were confined to their courtyards, in a section of the house without windows so their voices could not be heard from the outside. Women from more modest households fared slightly better: some worked as midwives, marriage brokers, dressmakers and Koranic teachers who used their homes as schools, while others were peddlers or market traders. In public, however, all women had to cover themselves in long black cloaks (the *abbayat*) and veil their faces with thick black cloths, the *boshiat*.

Change was prompted by Kuwait's transformation from a small seafaring community relying on maritime trade to a major oil producer after 1945. Such rapid economic expansion created a demand for an educated workforce and the state made education available to all Kuwaiti citizens. The educated woman became a symbol of modernity, an icon of the modern state. The new generation removed the traditional black veil, enrolled in higher education and competed with men in the labour market. By the 1990s, Kuwaiti women made up 35 percent of the workforce, with a vast majority employed as teachers, doctors, engineers and lawyers.

Despite these strides, Kuwaiti women continue to be legally defined as family members, whose rights and responsibilities are circumscribed by their roles as mothers, wives and daughters. Although the constitution does not discriminate between women and men with respect to their citizenship rights, a number of laws passed since its adoption are discriminatory. The 1962 Election Law, for example, restricts the right to vote and run for office to Kuwaiti men.

After the Gulf War, the Kuwaiti women's movement brought the voting issue to the forefront, providing the ground for an alliance between Islamist and liberal women activists. Suffragists invoked the heroic roles of women under Iraqi occupation, the sacrifices of female martyrs and wartime hardships as justifications for gaining political rights. Women inside Kuwait had participated in armed resistance and risked their lives smuggling food, money and medicine through military checkpoints. Many were caught, tortured, and killed.

All roads lead to the franchise

Bedouin women latch onto tradition.

Eye to eye:in other circles,women talk business.

© Isabelle Eshraghi/Vu, Paris

The educated woman became a symbol of modernity, an icon of the modern state

But whatever the sacrifices made and stereotypes challenged, the all-male parliament remained reluctant to extend to women full citizenship rights, theoretically guaranteed by the constitution. In November 1999, an Islamist-tribalist coalition succeeded in defeating a decree issued by Kuwait's ruler, Sheikh Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah, which would have granted women the right to run for office and vote in parliamentary and municipal elections.

Opponents appeal to narrow interpretations of religious law to justify the denial of citizenship rights to women. But the real impetus for their actions is a deep anxiety over a sluggish economy and changing gender roles. Climbing unemployment among Kuwaiti youth has raised questions about male identity as a breadwinner. Masculinity appears to be in crisis. Women are not only beginning to dominate some sectors in the labour market, they are also moving into positions of power in government and industry. The president of Kuwait University, the under-secretary in the ministry of higher education, and the managing director of the oil industry are all women. Female suffrage would not only undermine male supremacy, but also strengthen women's power in the public sphere. Hence, throughout the 1990s, Islamists and their Bedouin supporters used dif- ▶

Mama Anessa, hostess of an educational TV show.

All eyes on the bride at the Crown Plaza hotel.

All roads lead to the franchise

Asserting themselves:calling for reforms at Kuwait University.

ferent rationales to confine women to their traditional identities. They blamed rising divorce rates, child delinquency and declining family values on women's departure from their traditional roles. This Islamist-tribalist coalition even managed to force parliament to pass a law allowing working mothers early retirement in an attempt to make more public-sector jobs available to Kuwaiti men.

Nevertheless, Kuwaiti women are not willing to give up their gains, nor to end their movement for political rights. Following the defeat of the decree, female activists filed six court cases against the ministry of interior for not allowing them to register to vote, a move intended to force a ruling on the constitutionality of the Election Law.

Education has changed women's perceptions of themselves and their role in society. Even the most ardent Islamist women activists advocate the extension of the franchise to women and their participation in the public domain. Unlike liberal women activists who forged alliances with men's democratic groups, Islamist women have opted to work from within religious movements. For almost two decades, they have played the role of *day`at* (preachers), converting young women to Islam and extolling the virtues of a moral society. They succeeded in changing Kuwaiti women and popularizing the wearing of the Islamic veil.

Involvement in Islamist movements has actually given women new forms of power and prominence. The idealization

Involvement in Islamist movements has actually given women new forms of power and prominence

of the role of mothers as educators has increased their authority in the home. At the same time, by elevating the importance of female modesty, Islamist women have acquired a dignified and respected position in the public arena.

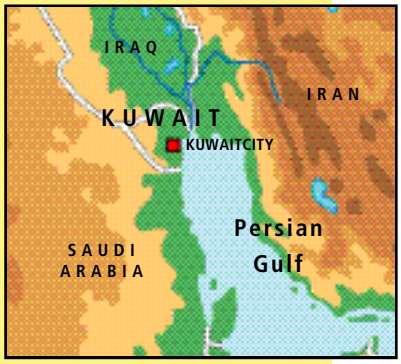
Empowered Islamist women activists share with their male counterparts the same dream of achieving an Islamic society ruled by religious idioms and norms. However, their ideal society appears to differ from the masculinist, hierarchical, ethical order in which women are disenfranchised and confined to roles dictated by their biological constitution. Islamist women activists are today embracing a more autonomous vision of an Islamic society and gender roles. Working from within the religious movements has given them the chance to engage in a dialogue over women's rights issues and create a new model of Muslim womanhood.

Women's gender activism in Kuwait is as diverse as it is complex, and highlights the ambiguity of their social status in a rapidly modernizing country. Most importantly, it reflects the variety of women's choices and aspirations in their struggle for gender equity. ■

Key figures...

Population: 2 million
Surface area: 18,000 sq. km
Female/male literacy rate: 78.5%/ 83.2%
Female/male GDP per capita: $13,347 vs $34,466

Sources: World Bank, UNDP (1998,1999).



...and dates

1899: A protectorate treaty is signed with Great Britain.
1961: Full independence achieved.
August 1990: Iraqi troops invade the country.
February 1991: US-led UN coalition forces liberate Kuwait.
1994: Iraq informs the UN that it recognizes Kuwait's sovereignty, territorial integrity and international boundaries.

Despite setbacks, there's no letting up on the right-to-vote campaign.

Corals under siege

Threatened by pollution, overfishing and global warming, coral reefs— a lifeline for millions of people—are dying off at an alarming rate

CHRISTL DENECKE

PROGRAMME FELLOW AT THE CORAL REEF ALLIANCE (BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA)

The vibrantly coloured rainforests of the sea received a disturbing bill of health during a recent gathering of marine biologists in Bali: in the past few decades, more than one quarter of the world's coral reefs have been destroyed by human activity. At the present rate, at least 57 percent will be lost within our lifetime.

This destruction threatens not only coral reefs, but also the lives of some 500 million or so people in southeast and southern Asia, eastern Africa and the Caribbean. For many of these coastal communities, corals are the largest source of protein: a healthy reef can provide more than 15 tonnes of fish and seafood per square kilometre each year, enough food for 2,500 people. And often they are the only source of income, employment and foreign exchange.

Coastal communities depend on their reefs to attract tourists, develop the capacity for commercial fishing, and protect shorelines from erosion and storm damage. In the British Virgin Islands, for example, 45 percent of revenue comes from tourism, which provides more than half of the territory's employment. A loss of reefs would probably cause the water to cloud with algae and the beaches to erode under the pressure of waves, leading to an estimated $130 million loss in income.

Created by more than 50 million yearsof evolution,coral reefs are one of the most complex and fragile webs of biodiversity on earth. Naturalists have catalogued more than 800 species of reef-building coral and 4,000 species of reef-dwelling fish. In total, coral reefs may shelter as many as one quarter of all marine species, and are especially important as nurseries for young fish.

So why are these lifelines disappearing faster than ever? On a local level, overfishing has decimated many individual reefs, notably in Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia and the Philippines. The removal of too many plant-eating fish allows algae to overgrow and kill the coral, beginning a chain reaction of local extinctions that quickly grows beyond the reef's natural ability to recover. Several fishing techniques are particularly lethal.

Blast fishing, when fishers explode homemade devices over reefs to kill fish, has severely damaged corals in eastern Africa. Fishing with sodium cyanide is no better: exposure to this chemical makes tropical fish slow and clumsy, and therefore much easier to catch,while at the same time killing off corals and many other reef animals.

Cyanide-fished reefs are often stripped of their marine life and overgrown by algae. Despite efforts to halt cyanide fishing, its frequency has increased in the past few years, driven by the high prices paid for live fish at tropical fish restaurants in Asia and aquariums in North America. Since this form of fishing began in the 1960s, the amount of cyanide dumped on coral reefs in the Philippines alone has exceeded one million kilograms.

But fishing is just one chapter of the story. Reefs are also being killed by industrial pollution, sediments running down rivers from deforested land and run-off from agricultural fertilizers. Activities such as coral mining, dredging, shipgrounding and construction break apart large coral strips and shatter delicate branches. Since reef-building corals only grow at a rate of 1.3 to 10.2 centimetres per year, each blast-fishing explosion and dragged object can destroy a century of reef development.

To make matters worse, global warming is adding to the plight of the reefs. Not only are corals fragile, but they are highly sensitive to temperature change. So when the 1998 El Niño winds warmed tropical waters from Africa through Indonesia and the Philippines and out into the Pacific, reefs in the region turned pale and quickly faded to an eerie shade of bone white, a phenomenon known as bleaching. Many bleached corals are finally killed by algae. The Global Coral

No more shelter for fish: a diver explores a blasted reef.

© M V Erdmann, Indonesia

Reef Monitoring Network estimates that bleaching in 1998 destroyed 16 percent of the earth's reefs. In the Indian Ocean, the Maldives, Sri Lanka and western India, bleaching had a devastating effect on reefs already damaged by sedimentation and pollution from onshore industry and land-clearing. Those that continue to be exposed to harmful human impacts are unlikely to ever recover. Above and beyond all other destructive pressures, there's a good chance that coral reefs as we know them will be gone in 30 to 50 years if global warming continues as expected.

While communities cannot do much about global warming, they can find ways to ally protection with economic growth. For example, tourism development and coral protection go hand-in-hand at the Bonaire Marine Park in the Dutch Antilles. The park, established in 1979, employs rangers to enforce bans on the collection of coral, spearfishing and commercial fishing in park areas. To make the park self-sustaining, managers began charging a user fee to all visitors in 1992. Bonaire was one of the first marine parks to fund itself, instead of relying on money from foundations or local taxes.

Now, the degradation of unprotected reefs elsewhere in the Caribbean has left Bonaire with some of the healthiest coral in the area. Almost 30,000 visitors flock to the park each year, which has fed Bonaire's tourism industry. The continuing efforts of park rangers to protect their reefs indicate that the island is set to maintain healthy coral and increase its revenue from tourism.

Bonaire is just one example of about 400 marine parks designed to protect reefs. Unfortunately, many of these are "paper" parks, lacking the funding or community support to enforce protection laws. Many are geographically isolated and, more often than not, near coastlines that are not managed properly, allowing erosion and chemicals from areas outside the park to flow in and damage coral.

With financial resources in developing countries stretched thin, the most effective path to protection lies in partnerships between local governments, international aid groups, NGOs and national foundations. The goal: to design effectively managed marine parks where communities maintain control over their resources with help from more experienced and better funded national or international organizations. Wealthy nations have an added stake in these biodiversity havens: they could well harbour precious chemicals for developing medicine. The most notable is azidothymidine (AZT), a drug widely used in industrialized countries to treat people with AIDS. AZT was created from a chemical produced by a Caribbean sea sponge that slows the growth of viruses. It is unknown how many more chemicals derived from coral reef animals may become the basis for similar life-saving drugs, but that is just one more good reason for speeding up the protection of our imperilled reefs. ■

www.coral.org
Clive Wilkinson (ed.), Status of Coral Reefs of the World: 2000**, Australian Institute for Marine Science.**

CORALS UNDER SIEGE

Patrolling the reefs

Riding on political reforms and foreign aid, scuba diving operators and villagers are taking matters into their own hands to salvage some of the world's richest reefs

JOHN C. RYAN

ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALIST

Looking down on the islands and straits of Indonesia's Komodo National Park from a rickety turboprop plane, the scenery seems timeless. From the air, the coral-studded seas and palm-tree-dotted grasslands look much as they have for centuries. If not for a few wooden fishing boats, the primordial scene of stark landscapes ruled by giant reptiles could almost be something out of *Jurassic Park*.

But landing just east of the park, there can be no doubt that we are in 21st-century Indonesia. Outside the tiny Labuanbajo airport, protesters are exercising their newly-won political freedoms to demand that the regent in charge of this part of the province hear their call for greater local autonomy before he steps on the twice-weekly flight out of town. Inside, a glossy display from the U.S.-based Nature Conservancy (TNC) alerts new arrivals to the tremendous diversity of Komodo's reefs and the many threats to them, from anchors to bombs to cyanide.

With their bewildering array of colours, shapes, textures and behaviours, Indonesia's psychedelic reefs leave first-time visitors, even experienced scuba divers, slack-jawed. Komodo National Park alone is home to 250 species of reef-building corals and 1,000 fish species—more than the entire Caribbean. Coral reefs are tremendously important for the people of Indonesia, providing half of the animal protein in the national diet. With more underwater species and more people living near reefs than in any other nation, the stakes are high in the struggle ▶

to stop the destructive fishing practices that constitute the biggest threat to the country's coral reefs.

Most Indonesian fishers use simple, low-impact techniques like hand-held lines or small nets suspended from *bagan*, the graceful, square-platformed crafts whose lonely kerosene lanterns dot the horizon at night throughout eastern Indonesia. But a minority of fishers make big money—often four times a government official's salary—by squirting cyanide or throwing home-made bottle bombs, both brutally effective means to catch fish and kill reefs. Blast fishing has already affected four-fifths of the nation's reefs. Though these practices are illegal, laws against them are seldom enforced by Indonesia's underfunded and often corrupt authorities.

Yet a few large national parks and small community-based reserves are succeeding in slowing down destruction of these habitats. Routine boat patrols, begun by authorities in 1996 with assistance from TNC's Indonesia Programme, have reduced fish bombing in Komodo by roughly 80 percent. In 2000, a new "floating ranger station," funded by the area's scuba diving operators and TNC, made two mass arrests in its first weeks of operation. The patrols have been controversial, dividing local communities between those who welcome the protection of economically important reefs and those who resent the intrusion of a wealthy American NGO.

Reef-protection efforts have been more of a hit with local communities around Bunaken National Park in North Sulawesi province. Members of the North Sulawesi Watersports Association charge a US$5 tax per scuba diver to fund reef patrols and have started scholarship and handicraft marketing programmes for communities in the park. "We pay the police approximately $250 for a two-day patrol and have gotten two big busts for bomb fishing, possibly the first in Indonesia. And the local community actually supports it," explains biologist Mark Erdmann, who works as an adviser to the park and with the water sports association.

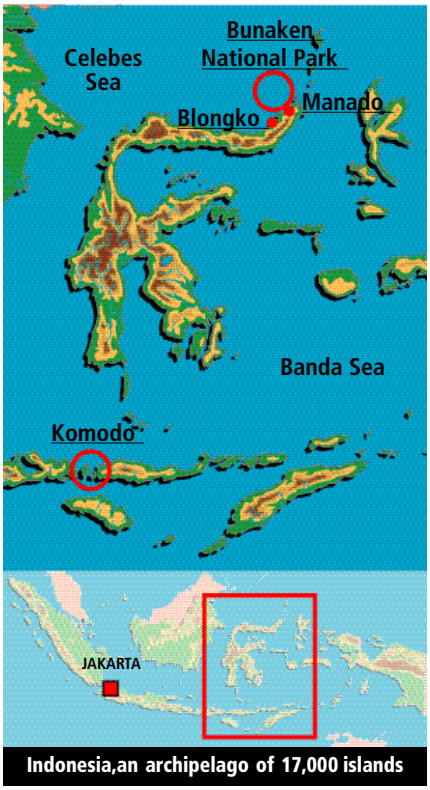
"For the first time in years, we can cast a line from the beach and catch a pelagic fish."

Some North Sulawesi villages have taken matters into their own hands, seizing the opportunity for community involvement in resource management presented by Indonesia's ongoing *reformasi*, or decentralization, process. In late 1998, the villagers of Blongko set aside six hectares of degraded coral reefs and mangroves as the first community-run marine sanctuary in Indonesia. Less than a year later, local fisheries have already made a noticeable recovery.

"We started the sanctuary to bring the fishing back to how it was in the past," explains Blongko's village head, Dolvi Janis. "Now, for the first time in years, we can even cast a line from the beach near the sanctuary and catch a pelagic [open-ocean] fish."

Two other Sulawesi villages have since established their own marine sanctuaries, and all 13 coastal villages in Blongko's district want to establish their own reserves. No-fishing reserves, even small ones, let fish recover so dramatically that they spill over to adjacent areas, actually allowing more fishing to occur than before the reserve was established.

The community-run reserves to date are quite small compared with national parks like Komodo, but they can be replicated widely at low cost. If the *reformasi* and international conservation forces on display in Labuanbajo airport combine to support them, even these small reserves have big potential to help Indonesia's reefs, fisheries, and coastal villages flourish into the future. ■



Indonesia, an archipelago of 17,000 islands

© Coastal and Marine Conservation Centre, Komodo National Park, Indonesia

Komodo National Park is seeking to attract more ecotourists to its underwater treasures.

They're connected, but are they learning?

Canada's ambitious vision of computer learning has made it one of the most connected nations on Earth. But in the country's classrooms, teachers are not getting the help they need to make the most of new technology

SEAN FINE

EDUCATION EDITOR AT THE GLOBE AND MAIL NEWSPAPER (TORONTO, CANADA)

At Toronto's Holy Family Catholic Elementary school, grade eight teacher Irene Korbabicz-Putko yearns to help her students make the most of computers. Her school board offers instruction to the teachers, but in a suburb a good 45 minute-drive away in rush hour. Not surprisingly, Ms. Korbabicz-Putko sometimes has other commitments.

Halfway across the country, at Calgary's Glendale Elementary School, the local school board has received funding not only for on-site teacher training but for an innovative programme that sends experts in computer education into classrooms to serve as mentors to the teachers.

Schools like Glendale are finding that new technology holds extraordinary promise. But Canada's experience with computers is very much a tale of two schools. Holy Family, for instance, has just one computer connected to the Internet for 600 students from kindergarten to grade eight. Glendale has several per classroom. Nationwide, the computer revolution is still in its early stages.

"Clearly we're in pioneering days," says Richard Smith, the director of Simon Fraser University's Centre for Policy Research on Science and Technology, who is studying the introduction of computers into the country's classrooms. "There will be missteps and mistakes made, but something is changing in education and clearly computers are part of it."

Back in 1994, Canada set a goal of having a computer connected to the Internet in every school and library. Federal politicians felt that for Canada to thrive, it must move beyond its traditional resource-based economy and prepare its young people for the knowledge-based world. By 1999, the country could boast that it was the first to hook up every willing school and library to the Internet. Only Sweden has a higher percentage of its students logging on at school.

But education in Canada remains the responsibility of the provinces. Each one has its own education budget to allocate. And each has its own views on how and when to integrate computers into the curriculum. In Alberta, for instance, computers are integrated in grade one, while in Ontario they are not generally given that kind of prominence until as late as grade seven. Alberta, after years of squeezing the schools for money, is now making extra funds available for innovation, and Calgary's school board has been quite bold in tapping into those funds. The Galileo Educational Network is one of its innovative projects designed to bring schools into the age of the knowledge-based economy.

© Industry Canada

Preparing students for the knowledge economy.

Explore and discover

The three-year project, funded by $600,000 from the province and matching funds from industry, is in place in ten schools, including Glendale Elementary. The idea is that teachers learn to use computers not only as a means of instruction, but as a tool for changing the very nature of the classroom. "Schools are set up on the industrial model. Children are educated to be workers for industry," says Pat Clifford, the president of Galileo. "They learn very early on the virtues of compliance. They are moved on every year. The learning is very structured and hierarchical."

Now, she says, students must take more responsibility for their own learning, with the teacher acting as a guide and facilitator. But it is unrealistic to expect that teachers can do this alone. The Galileo programme works closely with school principals and the local school boards, and allows teachers to take time off to chart out new approaches. When given this support, teachers can afford to confidently test out different ways. Susan Marinucci, a Grade ▶

Five teacher at Glendale Elementary, has woven computers into projects involving team work and real-life situations. When I recently visited the school, her 28 students were enthusiastically involved in a math and chemistry project. With their teacher's help, they had made soap and were discussing the best price to sell it at. The whole exercise had involved searching for recipes and pricing information on the Internet. In another class, younger students had to imagine they were on a desert island and design survival tools with very few resources at hand. Again, with the teacher's help, they drew some inspiration from pictures of tools found on the Internet.

These fledgling efforts reflect Smith's vision of computers as "providing an opportunity to engage students in a new style of learning—the explore and discover style." This includes opening up connections to new people and information sources. For Marinucci, the prime benefit is obvious: "we're connected to the world," she asserts.

© Industry Canada

Guiding students through the virtual universe.

An end to the sage?

Connection, so far, is probably the key word to describe a flurry of initiatives across the country, inside and outside the classroom. The Writers in Electronic Residence programme, for instance, connects budding student-writers at several schools to far-off professional authors who act as readers and mentors. In the eastern province of New Brunswick, a programme keeps teenage mothers in electronic contact with their schools after they give birth. In numerous schools, students are developing CD-ROMs documenting environmental and heritage issues, creating web pages and producing online magazines. Through its SchoolNet programme, the government works with the private sector and education groups to finance and promote these innovations.

Teachers experienced with computer learning understand that their roles must change, but that they are still vital to the learner. Larry Danielson, of Garden Valley Collegiate Institute in Winkler, Manitoba, has been teaching an English course available partly online for students enrolled in a co-operative programme (combining schooling with part-time employment). But his first principle stresses human contact: "We really focus on personal relationships, whether on-line or face to face."

"What we're seeing," says Elise Boisjoly, the executive director of Canada's SchoolNet, "is gradually the teachers are becoming less of the 'sage on the stage' than a 'guide on the side.' It's a cultural shift, and one that will take a bit of time." Her hope is that such methods begin as early as grade one. "If you start early it will be in the culture of the learner. That's part of the larger goal of building a lifelong-learning culture."

But she acknowledges that there is a long way to go. Lack of teacher training is a major barrier, she says. In Ontario, for instance, the number of annual professional-development days has been cut from nine to four. And money is short for maintaining and repairing the computers. "If computers aren't used in the right way, they can impede learning," Boisjoly says. "The guidance of the teacher is critical."

But as the experience of Irene Korbabicz-Putko suggests, Canada has only begun to address the issue of how to train its 300,000 public school teachers. "There are exceptional cases of well-trained teachers, but overall it's not one of our bright lights," says Smith. Until teacher training receives its due, the country will miss out on the real benefits of the computers it has installed at such expense and effort in the classroom. ■

A DISSENTING VIEW

"When students venture into the virtual landscapes, they are often dazzled and confused by all the choices available. A Montreal teacher visited some 40 elementary schools to find out just how the Internet was being used and discovered that the grade 5 and 6 students changed sites on average 15-25 times per hour. He also found they were unable to take in what they were seeing. After observing 1,000 or so students, he concluded that most of them simply weren't absorbing anything of any value. Teachers must also become conversant with new varieties of plagiarism made possible by computers. Before the Internet can be of use to anyone, and to prevent it from being an expensive distraction in the classroom, a human scaffolding must be put into place. There may be no filters on the Internet, but in schools, there are filters, and they're called teachers." ■

Extracted from an address by Alison Armstrong, co-author of **The Child and the Machine**, to the British Colombia Public Education Conference in Canada.

THEY'RE CONNECTED, BUT ARE THEY LEARNING?

Time for schools to tune into the information age

Schools still have to make a quantum leap if they are to prepare students for the information society, says Edwyn James, of the OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation

INTERVIEW BY
CYNTHIA GUTTMAN

UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST

OECD countries allocate one to two percent of their education budgets to information and communication technology (ICT). How far have they come in making them real learning tools?

Relatively speaking, education hasn't even begun to look at what the implications are, and they are huge. On average, OECD countries spend around 0.25 percent of their education budgets on research and development compared to seven percent for certain sectors of industry. As a result, we still know very little about ICT impact on individual learning, and teachers are not being equipped with the necessary skills to use these new tools.

So schools are being equipped without much thought about the next step?

Here there is a paradox. ICT can help students develop a range of skills required by the modern economy, such as learning how to learn, problem-solving, knowing how to acquire and evaluate information, but these are not reflected in the school curriculum. Teachers are not going for open-ended inquiries and the exchange of ideas with other schools and people. Leaving exams at the end of secondary school are still broadly based on a corps of knowledge and the ability to produce. Why should teachers invest time in developing new techniques that are not sufficiently valued by the system? At the same time, those who are doing so run the risk of prejudicing their students' chances at exams.

Is ICT nonetheless changing the teacher's role?

I recoil strongly from the idea of the teacher just being there when a student is having trouble. It suggests an aimless kind of educational experience. Learning is a planned exercise. But the pace of change ushered in by computer technology has made us more aware than ever that knowledge is transient. We cannot see the teacher as someone who gets pumped up at university and repeats the same lessons for the next 40 years. Teachers have to develop more ties with universities and be well enough connected within society to know whom to turn to and ask questions, on a basis of mutual respect.

How could training be improved?

Teachers have to be empowered to use ICT. If professional development could take place online and provide teachers with resources to integrate ICT, they would gain confidence in these technologies. Poor-quality software is another big obstacle. The way forward is to encourage dialogue between manufacturers and teachers in order to decide what type of software is required and what is feasible, both technically and economically. This is just beginning to happen.

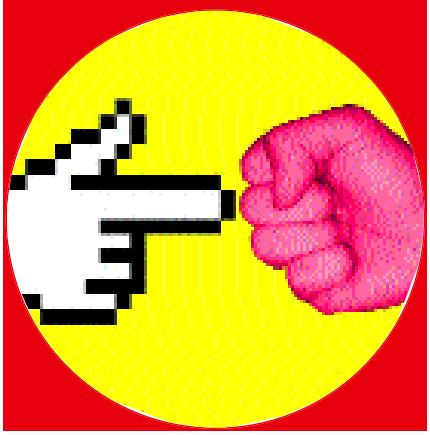
Is ICT economically viable?

Most computers have five-year write-off periods at the very most. How do you justify putting enormous amounts of hardware into a school open six hours a day, 40 weeks a year, when in five years, things will be obsolete anyway? There are universities where facilities are open around the clock, allowing users to plug in when they wish. The school should also give the community a chance to take advantage of its facilities. For example, technically skilled students could receive modest honoraria for doing work in the evenings at school. You have to see the school as part of the community, networking in both directions, rather than as a walled entity. ■

STUDENT WORDS

To find out how ICT—notably CD-ROMs and the Internet—help or hinder learning, CERI set up an international network comprisedof 29 students between 17 and 20 years old, which culminated in a roundtable in December 2000. Whether they came from North America, Europe or the Pacific, their assessments were remarkably aligned. While recognizing that the Internet was a powerful tool for learning, many expressed frustration with it: "Teachers say 'You can search on the Internet,' but mostly do not give us time to do so"; "Sometimes teachers give us addresses but we discover that they do not exist"; "Very often the lesson is spoiled by having to solve technical problems"; "the traditional method of searching [in the encyclopaedia] is faster and safer." While crying out for better teacher training and software, students also proposed steps for reducing the frequent "digital divide" between school and home. Finally, they expressed unease over the cultural dominance of Microsoft, rejecting the idea of a commercial monopoly making big profits from schools. Students felt that greater priority should be put on developing materials with a local cultural flavour, while acknowledging that computers had the potential to start bridging the cultural divide. ■

http://bert.eds.udel.edu/oecd/roundtables/



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Police and corporate forces are so quietly wiring their way into daily life that we barely notice it, says Simon Davies, director of Privacy International. Before long, someone somewhere may be watching as you switch TV channels or call on a mobile phone (pp. 18-19). We are witnessing the rise of a surveillance society, where social control is deemed essential for economic efficiency and security (pp. 20-22). Yet even in Japan, where a high-tech market in voyeurism has skyrocketed, few can afford to treat their lives as an open book (pp. 22-23).

Protect yourselves! To reinforce defences, the European Union is fighting to protect personal data in e-commerce (pp. 24-25), while companies are rivalling to market technologies to guarantee online anonymity (p. 26). From Guatemala to Haiti, human rights activists are learning the art of encryption to protect their sources (pp. 27-28). And then there is the ultimate, yet difficult, defence: by foregoing testing to protect their genetic secrets, many Americans are simply rejecting the new technologies (pp. 29-30). A counter-offensive is also taking shape through activists like James To, a renegade legislator in Hong Kong (p. 31). Meanwhile an eclectic crew of cyber-rights and corporate groups is taking aim at a proposed cyber-crime treaty (pp. 32-33), while Duncan Campbell, the journalist who revealed the spy network Echelon, continues his investigation on international surveillance (pp. 34-35). Finally, British satirist Mark Thomas leads a merry dance around the ubiquitous surveillance cameras of George Orwell's homeland (pp. 36-37).

Dossier concept and co-ordination by Amy Otchet and Sophie Boukhari.

ATCHING YOU...
a wired world

OPINION

A PRIVACY DIVIDE?

BY ROHAN SAMARAJIVA

VISITING PROFESSOR AT DELFT UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, NETHERLANDS; DIRECTOR OF EXTERNAL PROGRAMS, LIRNE.NET [LEARNING INITIATIVE FOR REFORMS IN NETWORK ECONOMIES]; AND FORMER DIRECTOR GENERAL OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS OF SRI LANKA.

Over the past decade, the talk,and to some extent the practice, of privacy in rich countries has undergone a sea change. Privacy, once seen as a minority concern of paranoid activists, is today at the centre of e-commerce and information society discussions.

Is this concern limited to rich countries? Is Internet and telecom privacy not a policy issue or a public concern in countries on the bleak side of the digital divide? Is privacy a non-universal human right? I address these questions from the dual perspectives of a student of privacy and of a former privacy policy-maker.

There is little, if any, evidence on the level of public concern about privacy in poor countries. But it is a fact that the issue does not figure large in the policy agendas of these countries. For example in Sri Lanka, the civil war and its attendant problems of security, the cost of living and unemployment are likely to be listed as priority issues, not privacy. Even if the focus were to be narrowed to Internet and telecom, it is likely that access to voice telephones would be given more weight.

Attitudes toward telephone numbers can indicate the intensity of telecom privacy concerns. In parts of the United States such as Nevada well over 50 per cent of residential telephone numbers are unpublished. Home telephone numbers are usually not printed on U.S. business cards. By contrast, it is a rare Sri Lankan business card that does not flaunt one. The street sign of the Coroner's Court of Sri Lanka's capital city displays the Coroner's home number.

In 1998-99,I chaired a public hearing on the improvement of telephone billing that addressed the making available of hitherto undisclosed and uncollected call details. I was surprised that only one of the over 400 public submissions mentioned privacy—an objection to the distribution of telephone bills unprotected by envelopes. Until the hearing, the major operator did not collect or provide call details. This was good for privacy but cause for much consumer unhappiness and billing disputes. The hearing had to decide on the form of disclosing more information.

Do these facts not reinforce the claim that privacy is not universal? Academic research suggests otherwise. Irwin Altman of the U.S. has shown that the essence of privacy—the ability, explicitly or implicitly, to negotiate boundary conditions of social relations—is transcultural. What differs among cultures is the concrete form of privacy concern. It is natural to see a heightened awareness of Internet privacy in the U.S. The same form will not be found in Sri Lanka, where there are less than four telephones per one hundred people.

When privacy was given concrete form, such as indiscriminate access to the details about telephone calls, people understood and cared. That enabled the crafting of a final order of the public hearing that safeguarded privacy while improving the transparency of the billing process.

Policy discourses in digitally deprived countries have emphasized external forces as drivers of privacy policies. In developing elements of the legal information-communications infrastructure for the Sri Lankan government in the late 1980s, I found most persuasive the claim that our privacy policies must meet European Union standards for the sake of our trading relationships. But the external rationale alone is a weak foundation. Effective policies need public support. Privacy advocates within and outside government must rethink their missions as including a strong component of public education. What I learned in the public hearing was the need to translate abstract privacy concerns into stories that relate to the everyday lives of citizens. This is the key to bridging the privacy divide. ■

The spy in your refrigerator...

Governments and corporations are wiring their way into your home and you may not even notice it, according to Simon Davies. The world's leading privacy advocate chronicles the rise of the surveillance society where the bedrock of civil rights—privacy—is being systematically chipped away (pp. 20-22)

SIMON DAVIES

DIRECTOR OF PRIVACY INTERNATIONAL, A HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP BASED IN LONDON (WWW.PRIVACYINTERNATIONAL.ORG)

To imagine the year 2020, forget for a moment the cumbersome technology portrayed in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. If present trends continue, surveillance tools will be so seamlessly integrated in our environment that we won't even notice the constant intrusion into our privacy.

Closed circuit television cameras (CCTV) may be the most obvious—and onerous—future intrusion. As is already the case in Britain (see p. 36), cameras will become a fixed component in the design of modern urban centres, new housing areas, public buildings and the road system (thanks to a massive network of linked number plate recognition cameras). Perhaps it is only a matter of time before legal and community pressures force the cameras into our homes.

As visual surveillance becomes ubiquitous, so will mass surveillance of Internet and telephone activity. American and European law enforcement agencies have already laid the foundations for a massive eavesdropping system capable of intercepting all mobile phones, Internet communications, fax messages and pagers throughout Europe. The plan, known as Enfopol 98, has been drawn up in secret by police and justice officials as part of a strategy to create a "seamless" web of telecommunications surveillance that will one day cross all national boundaries—touching citizens everywhere.

The strategy will oblige all ISPs (Internet Service Providers) and telephone networks to provide agencies with "real time, full time" access to all communications, regardless of the country of origin. All new communications media, including interactive cable television, will be required to do the same.

Enfopol will be aided by a subject-tagging system capable of continually tracking targeted individuals. Known as the "International User Requirements for Interception" (IUR), the system, which is currently being designed, will include not only the names, addresses and phone numbers of targets and associates, but email addresses, credit card details, PINs, passwords and even geographic data from mobile phones.

Enfopol is just one of several burgeoning systems used to monitor and profile international communications. Perhaps the most astounding is Echelon, a global eavesdropping system established by the U.S. National Security Agency that is further discussed on pages 34-35.

Perfect surveillance requires perfect identity, and the next 20 years will see a comprehensive effort by authorities to achieve this end. As well as creating DNA databases—notably to identify people convicted of violent crimes and missing children—governments and companies are likely to expand the use of national electronic finger and hand-scanning systems.

Known as "biometric identifiers," these systems are already used throughout the world. They are sup-

posedly able to perfectly identify an individual by electronically scanning the fine details of a hand, finger or eye (retina). Spain has begun a national fingerprint system to control unemployment benefits and health-care entitlements. Russia has announced plans for a national electronic fingerprint system for banks. Jamaicans are required to scan their thumbs into a database before qualifying to vote at elections. In France and Germany, tests are underway to put finger-print information onto credit cards.

For the past five years, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) has been developing an automated passport control system using hand geometry captured on a "smart" computer chip card. At the airport, frequent travellers present their card and then pass their hand through a scan. More than 70,000 people have already enrolled in the plan which, according to an INS spokesman, will be expanded worldwide.

But it is the growth of workplace surveillance that will most directly affect people. In a majority of countries, employers are permitted—"within reason"—to place all employees under constant surveillance. They can tap phones, read email and monitor computer screens. They can bug conversations, analyze computer work, peer through CCTV cameras and use tracking technology like "smart" ID badges to even monitor trips to the bathroom. Indeed, employers now routinely insist on urine tests to detect drug use and review the most intimate personal and medical data.

The current telephone software for keeping tabs on employees' calls seems primitive compared to the new generation, which can analyze keystrokes on a terminal to determine if time is being efficiently used between conversations. Even highly skilled workers can expect to be regularly put under the microscope. It's likely that network-operating software (which lets you exchange files with a colleague) already permits your manager to eavesdrop by observing your screen in real time, scanning data files and email and even overwriting passwords. All of which leads us in one direction: the workplace of tomorrow will have many features of the Dickensian workhouse.

Even your home will not be free from surveillance. The new generation of interactive digital television (known as i-TV) services, currently being developed, will offer a new intimacy between TV service provider and customer. By directly drawing information on viewing habits, financial transactions and on-screen "vox pop" surveys, the company can create a complex profile of every customer.

A recent investigative book, *Spy TV* (edited by David Burke, an American researcher), describes how i-TV broadcasters will use neural network software to create "psychological profiles" and then "modify the behaviour" of viewers. Basically, your TV will show you a product, monitor your response and then show you something else based upon it. This cycle will let your TV set learn enough about you until it has you doing what it wants. And one day, the person controlling your TV will be replaced by a computer running artificial intelligence software.

© Jean Lecointre, Paris

Privacy is and will be eroded in countless other ways. Mobile phones are being turned into geographical tracking devices with the aim of providing customers "useful" information, like the location of the nearest petrol station or an advertisement for a local restaurant. The question is not whether you want or need these services, but do you want to be trailed?

You are probably already being followed on the Internet. While some on-line companies keep track of consumers' purchases, others offer personalized services like news searches, free email and stock portfolios. They then sell or trade this information to business associates without the consumer's consent (see p. 24).

Every time you visit a website, a small file containing an ID number—known as a "cookie"—is automatically placed on your hard drive to make it easier to "flip" back through pages on a website. However, advertising networks can use a single cookie to track a user across thousands of websites. The Internet Engineering Task Force (made up of network designers, vendors and researchers) is now developing a system to assign a permanent ID number to every device, like a VCR, hooked onto the net. So it may be only a matter ot time before somebody somewhere knows exactly what you keep in the refrigerator. ■

To join the i-TV boycott: http://www.spytv.co.uk

The electronic computer is to individual privacy what the machine gun was to horse cavalry.

Alan W. Scheflin, American law professor (1942-) and Edward M. Opton, Jr., American psychology researcher (1936-)

...and the spy who loves us all

S.D.

THE picturesque streets of Edinburgh (Scotland) are currently playing host to an extraordinary episode in the ancient struggle between individual privacy and state power. Here, at the headquarters of the Lothian and Borders Police, the DNA of the local population is being systematically archived.

You see, that's the problem with terrorists—they have no respect for your private life.

Arnold Schwarzenegger, Austrian-American actor, in "True Lies" (1947-)

For the past two years, every person arrested or detained by Edinburgh police has been forced to take a DNA test. The offences that warrant this practice are not confined to the obvious categories of murder, rape and burglary, but also to traffic offences, shoplifting, and public order transgressions such as breach of the peace.

The collection and storage of DNA must surely rank as one of the most intimate invasions of the person,and yet the policy appears to have secured substantial public support. A recent opinion poll suggests that nearly three-quarters of the local population would be willing to give up their DNA in the "pursuit of a crime."

The UK Home Office and other government agencies have also been excited by the potential of DNA testing. Recent Child Support Agency legislation requires all alleged runaway fathers to submit to a DNA test. Failure to do so is tantamount in law to an admission of guilt.

The current mania for DNA testing is merely a symptom of a much broader trend throughout the world. In the past, surveillance was based on the targeting of specific individuals or groups. In recent years, governments and private sector organizations have moved to incorporate it into almost every aspect of our finances, communication and lifestyle. While paying lip service to privacy, they argue that surveillance is necessary to maintain law and order and to promote economic efficiency. The rationale is often self-serving, and somewhat bogus, but a substantial number of people have nevertheless been persuaded that the surrender of privacy is the price we must pay for a better and safer society.

The result is that many countries are becoming surveillance societies. There has probably never been a time in history when so much information has been amassed on the population-at-large. Details of the average economically active adult in the developed world are located in around 400 major databases—enough processed data to compile a formidable reference book for each person.

It is common wisdom that the power, capacity and speed of information technology are accelerating rapidly. The extent of privacy invasion—or certainly the potential to invade privacy—increases correspondingly. But it is not merely the increased capacity and decreasing cost of information technology that creates threats to privacy. Globalization of systems such as the Internet removes geographical limitations (and legal protections) to data flows. Modern information systems are increasingly compatible and can exchange and process different forms of data.Meanwhile multimedia, which fuses many forms of transmission and expression of data and images, creates vast difficulties for legislators wishing to protect personal privacy.

An example: the company UK InfoDisc has produced a CD-ROM that merges the electoral roll data with the telephone book and geo-demographic data.So now the most basic and innocent information about you can be entered into the disc, revealing all manner of facts. Your telephone number leads instantly to your address. Your name leads automatically to your occupation and age. It goes without saying that the finance and credit

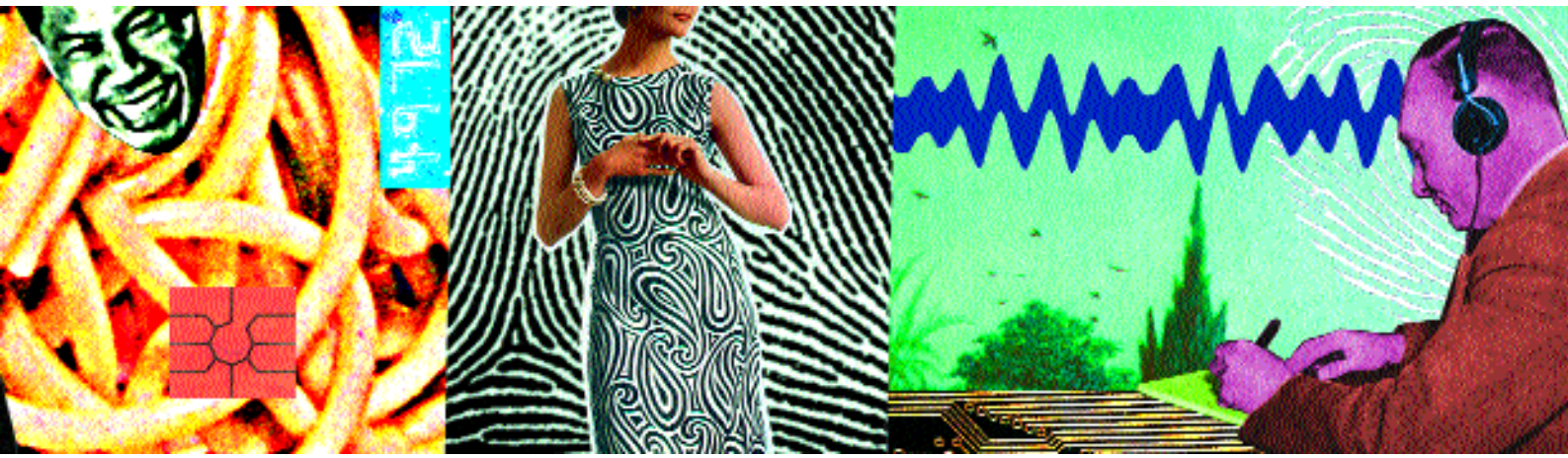
industry, private investigators, newspapers, marketing companies and police all make extensive use of the product.

These issues are important because the growing informational bond between citizen and state (and of course the private sector) is nibbling away at human autonomy. As decision-making by institutions becomes automated, the factors that affect our lives are made on the basis of an increasing mass of intimate personal data. The risk of statelessness or discrimination correspondingly intensifies.

In developing countries, the threat is magnified. The perfect identification of individuals can have fatal consequences. Governments of developing nations rely on first world countries to supply them with equipment for digital wiretapping, tracking and deciphering data along with scanners, bugs and computer intercept systems. The transfer of surveillance technology from first to third world (sometimes known as the repression trade) is now a lucrative sideline for the arms industry. While information technology companies routinely promote their products as a means of achieving social reform, the human rights community increasingly defines them as a means of social and political control.

In this environment, the struggle to strike a balance between individual autonomy and state power is more complex than ever. Not surprisingly, no other fundamental right in the public policy arena has generated such turbulence and controversy as privacy. While the international community has reached a baseline consensus on torture, discrimination and racial hatred, privacy is viewed by many governments and corporations as the bogeyman of human rights. While opinion polls consistently indicate that people care about privacy, public opposition even to the most blatant intrusion is sporadic.

In the United States, the fingerprinting of welfare recipients has proceeded with scarcely a ▶



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THE BEDROCK OF CIVIL LIBERTIES

The world's leading experts are still unable to agree on a single definition of privacy despite decades of academic debate. One pioneer in the field, Alan Westin of the U.S., described privacy as "part philosophy, some semantics, and much pure passion." On that point, at least, everyone agrees. The recognition of privacy is nevertheless deeply rooted in history. The Bible makes numerous references to it. Jewish law has long recognized the concept of freedom from being watched. There were also protections in Classical Greece and ancient China. The Hippocratic Oath, dating from 300 BC, demands the confidentiality of doctor-patient relationships. Western countries have had protections for hundreds of years by, for example, applying rules to arrest peeping Toms or eavesdroppers. In the early 19th century, parliamentarian William Pitt famously wrote, "The poorest man may in his cottage bid defiance to all the force of the Crown. It may be frail; its roof may shake; the wind may blow through it; the storms may enter; the rain may enter—but the King of England cannot enter; all his forces dare not cross the threshold of the ruined tenement."

Indeed privacy is neither a modern nor a western concept. While the idea of privacy as a fundamental human right still raises eyebrows in many developing countries, the concept is familiar to the citizens of those cultures. At a societal and government level, privacy may be viewed with some suspicion, and yet at a personal level, everyone draws a curtain around certain aspects of family and private life.

In some respects, privacy is similar to freedom: the less you have of it, the easier it is to recognize. Like the concept of freedom, privacy means different things to different cultures. In France, it equates most closely to liberty. In America, it is an inseparable component of individual freedoms—particularly freedom from intrusion by federal government. Many European countries interpret privacy as the protection of personal data.

For numerous Anglo-Saxon and French authors, the right to privacy entails respect for "private life": the right to live, as far as one wishes, protected from publicity and to develop fulfilling relationships.

"In one sense, all human rights are aspects of the right to privacy," as Fernando Volio Jimenez, a champion of democracy from Costa Rica, once observed. Privacy protection is one way of drawing the line on how far society can intrude into your affairs. In that context, privacy is a question of power—your own as well as that of the government, your family, employer and neighbour. It can even be a benchmark to indicate how much autonomy a nation should have in the emerging international order. ■

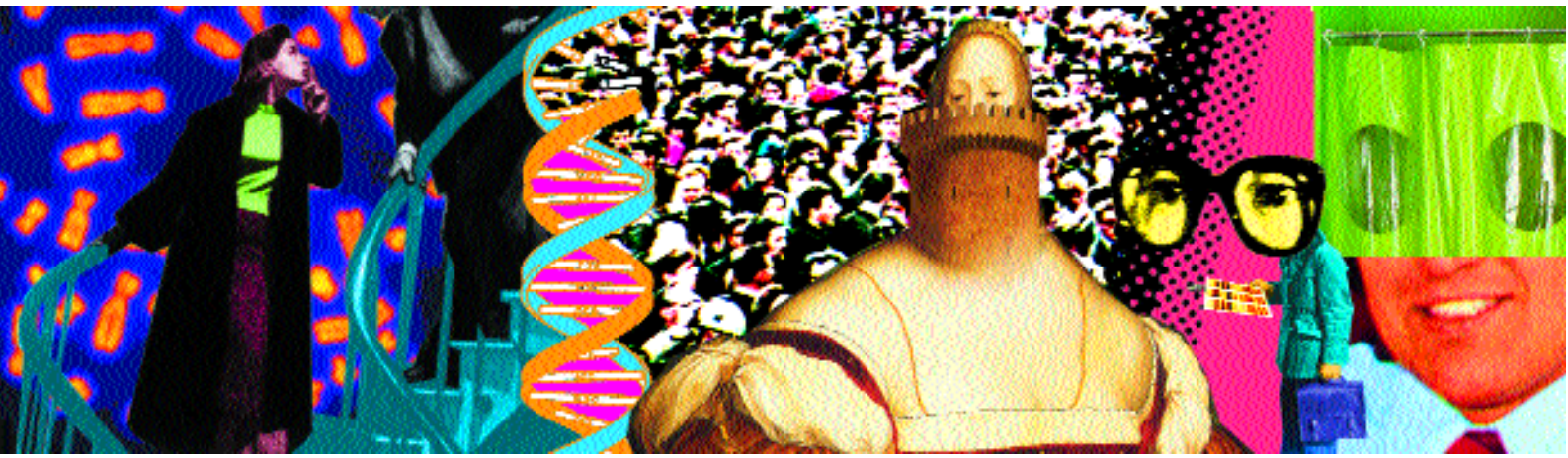
murmur of discontent,while in Australia,attempts by the federal government to introduce a national identity card sparked the biggest public protest in recent memory. And yet while Australian legislation forcing banks to report suspicious transactions passed without notice, similar legislation in the U.S. provoked more than a quarter of a million written complaints. In Germany and Australia, proposals to introduce digital phone services sparked widespread privacy concerns. Identical technology in Britain was introduced with little or no discussion.

The most dangerous enemy of privacy, however, is the well-meaning individual who argues "I have nothing to hide, so I have nothing to fear." Nothing could be further from the truth. Everyone has a sphere of private life which must be protected from intrusion. Few people could honestly claim that their life—their family details, financial affairs and health history—is an open book.Even if this were so, their happy position should not provide a rationale for the invasion of other people's lives.

But the argument for privacy goes well beyond the integrity and autonomy of each individual. Privacy is the fundamental test of a free society's strength. The right to privacy is the right to protect ourselves against intrusion by the outside world. It is the measure we use to set limits on the demands made upon us. It is the right we invoke to defend our personal freedom, our autonomy and our identity. It is the basis upon which we assess the balance of power between ourselves and the world around us.

Privacy is also the natural partner of freedom of expression. They are equal and compatible rights. More so, both have evolved in the modern context as a synergy. As the world embraces the information society and our lives go increasingly on-line, the forces that promote censorship also diminish privacy—and vice versa.

It will become apparent in the coming years that these two rights will form the Great Pillars of any free society. ■



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Japan: voyeuristic games

Gadgets and "electronic leashes" are the rage in Tokyo where people don't just spy on their neighbours but on the latest star in vogue

MICHEL TEMMAN AND YVES BOUGON

FRENCH JOURNALISTS BASED IN TOKYO

Akihabara, Tokyo's electronics retail district, has been bustling since 1998, when the new economy really took off in Japan. "New computers and cell phones with Internet access are the best-selling products," says Toshihiro Miyazaki, a salesman at Laox, a huge mass-consumer temple devoted to electronics.

But another section of the store is also packed: the one selling gadgets for spying on spouses, neighbours and co-workers—miniature digital cameras with pictures that can be viewed from a distance, micro-chips, miniature recorders and electronic "leashes" so small they are almost invisible. Researchers and engineers in the laboratories of Sony, Sharp, Panasonic and others are busy developing

more and more miniaturized devices. Prices range from 30,000 yen ($255) to 200,000 yen ($1,700), and sales at Laox have been rising since 1999. These items are especially popular with 15 to 25 year-olds (the *sedai* video-game generation) and with *otaku* (children of the virtual empire). Others, known as the *camera kozô* , get their share of fun from snapping embarrassing pictures with remote-controlled miniature cameras.

In Japan, a society influenced by Confuciansim, control over the self and others has always been the norm. The neighbourhood police station (*koban*) and foot patrolmen still frequently draw up detailed lists of local residents and inquire about the identity of newcomers as soon as they move in. Neighbourhood committees (*tonarigumi*), an institution dating back to the 16th century, were used during the Second World War to punish activities deemed anti-Japanese. Although the committees are on the wane, they still exist.

Sony unveils the "world's smallest and lightest" digital still camera, weighing just 26 grammes.

© Susumu Takahashi/Reuters/maxppp, Paris

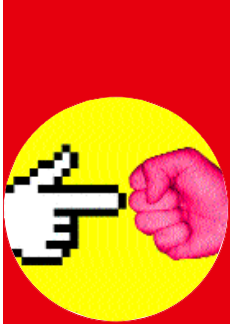
Today, these traditional ways of watching people seem harmless compared to the spying being done with new electronic products. There are regular reports on television about acts of voyeurism. Some people specialize in spying on public toilets, while others hide cameras and microphones in the homes of friends or young, single women. Others have turned into Internet paparazzi, broadcasting their stealthy pictures on the Web. Recently, the marathon runner Naoko Takahashi, who has become a star since bringing home a gold medal from the Sydney Olympics, found that her fame had stretched beyond acceptable limits. Thousands of copies of a video featuring her naked in her bathroom have been illegally sold. A miniature camera filmed the pictures without her knowledge.

The Japanese are increasingly concerned about the rising number of abuses. In January, a high school teacher was arrested for filming his students changing in the locker room, and a cameraman from the national NHK television network filmed people at home without their knowing it. Debate is stepping up over an inexpensive service called Imadoko ("where are you?"), which allows parents to track their children's every move. A microchip built into a cell phone tells the company where the user is at all times. At the parents' request, the company sends them a map showing their child's exact whereabouts.

The Japanese feel even more anxious because the government has recently passed a law strengthening the powers of the central police authorities (NPA) and the justice ministry to use spying tools such as phone taps and email screening. "This law is designed to help criminal investigations, not to interfere in people's daily lives," the NPA says. But some specialists, such as Shin Mizukoshi, a media expert at Tokyo University, are asking uneasy questions: "Has Big Brother broken into our homes? Isn't police interception of communications a new invasion of privacy?"

These methods are mainly used to combat computer piracy. A law "forbidding illegal access" has just come into force — it punishes computer crimes with a year's imprisonment and a 500,000-yen fine ($5,000). Eighty engineer-police officers stalk criminals at the NPA's High-Tech Crime Technical Expert Center, a cyber-surveillance centre with an annual budget of 190 million yen ($1.85 million).

But trouble-makers are also honing their electronics skills. Recently, a pair of kidnappers used prepaid phones to announce their ransom demands and conditions. "The omnipresence of advanced mobile communication systems creates new challenges," says an NPA official. "Compromises are necessary in the interest of the public and its security." As legal expert Yoichi Higuchi observes, the right to privacy may remain "virtual" in Japan. ■



Data-swindlers: gold minin

Trading personal data on Internet users is a booming business that is also spurring laws to protect e-consumers

CATHERINE MAUSSION

JOURNALIST AT THE FRENCH DAILY LIBÉRATION

Two hundred dollars just for answering a questionnaire. The offer from an American group called Greenfield Consulting recently landed in the electronic mailbox of a member of France's Information Technology and Freedom Commission (CNIL). The attractive proposal reflects the high premium that companies put on gathering data about Internet users.

Every year in late January, a huge file fair, the "customer relations" exhibition, takes place in Paris. At this year's event, entirely devoted to e-commerce and the Internet, I-Base, a start-up founded in 1999, offered its file of 15 to 35 year-olds, "a behavioural database of over 700,000 young people." Where do the names and data come from? The company refuses to answer the question. Another firm taking part in the event, Consodata, is one of France's two megabase companies. Each year, Consodata and its counterpart, Claritas, send a form to millions of mailboxes with questions about outstanding loans, reading habits, hobbies, etc. Every bit counts: with time, these information snippets turn into refined consumer profiles that are worth gold.

In the age of e-commerce and personalized services, these companies are increasingly interested in Internet users. To find out their every whim, Consodata has set up a special subsidiary called Cabestan, which offers online games as bait to subscribers of Spray, an access provider. Personal information left behind while answering a quiz thus became a gold mine for Cabestan, which will put the data on the market soon.

These practices are already very far advanced in the United States, the cradle of the Net economy and of "data mining." Serge Gauthronet, a consultant specializing in these issues, went there to visit "e-mail marketers" with "a mind-boggling artillery." First, they send forms to the most popular sites, asking visitors to answer questions about their profession, leisure activities, children and so on. What's more, the Internet users are "tracked" while making purchases and surfing the Net. This enables online marketing firms to send them increasingly specific offers. These companies boast about being able to send up to 100 million emails a day! Since there are about 200 of them worldwide, their total strike force may be as high as 20 billion emails a day, says Gauthronet, or "about sixty emails per electronic mailbox every 24 hours!"

When the cookies crumble

Gauthronet has just submitted a detailed report about these practices to the European Commission. His first conclusion is that data-gathering methods seem more transparent now than they did a few years ago, when the overwhelming majority of companies collected information without Internet users knowing it. Their most widespread methods consisted of using "cookies" (software installed on hard drives to record users' comings and goings on the Net), or directing their questions to children, who are more forthcoming. Nowadays, information is increasingly gathered with the express consent of the consumer (known as the "opt-in" principle), who can pull out of the game at any time. Another advance is "permission marketing": e-marketers are starting to ask users for their

THE LONG ARM OF THE LAW

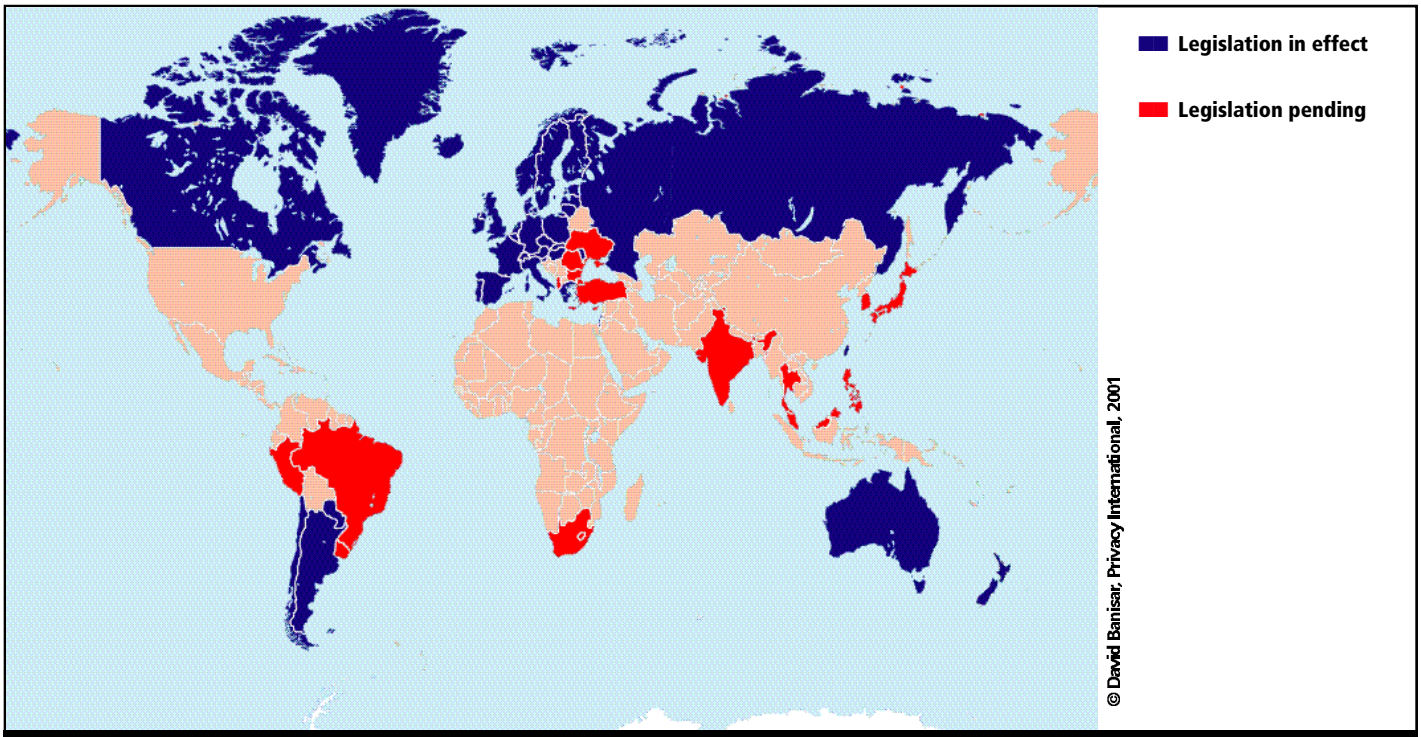
DoubleClick, the Internet's largest advertising firm, had better watch its step. The company puts advertising banners on websites—and spies on users with electronic informers called cookies. The purpose is to determine Internet surfers' profiles so that they can be sent tailor-made advertisements.

As long as Internet users were identified only by information about their computers, they remained relatively anonymous. But everything changed in 1999 when DoubleClick bought out Abacus, a database company that kept track of some two billion online orders—and the names of millions of Americans who placed them! DoubleClick combined its own files with that of Abacus to make an even bigger, more accurate database—and, more alarming still, one with names.

Privacy watchdog groups went on the offensive and sued the company. Eventually, DoubleClick was forced to give up its megabase.

More recently, the world's biggest e-bookseller, Amazon, sparked another controversy. In September 2000, the money-losing business suddenly decided to rent customer information to third parties, something it had agreed not to do. Again, American privacy advocates sued. The bookseller

g in the badlands of e-commerce



A global view of data protection laws.

consent before bombarding them with advertising emails.

So, where's the threat? First,says Gauthronet, some companies don't always have a very scrupulous vision of opt-in. "For example," he explains, "an Internet user just has to bookmark a site to be considered giving consent for everything and anything." In another abuse, sensitive information sometimes finds its way into a routine and authorized data-gathering procedure without the Internet user knowing it. Beyond that, Gauthronet raises issues of freedom and "the dispossession of the self" that databases are going to bring about. "When your identity is frozen," he says, "you're stripped of the right and means to define yourself the way you want to." And of course, he mentions the steady erosion of the consumer's privacy.

Vacancies in the safe harbor

On October 25, 1995, the European Union unanimously adopted a directive that gives all its citizens the right to access databases, the right of rectification,and the right to refuse the sale of data to a third party. The measure also stipulates that no file may leave Europe for a third country unless the latter can guarantee an "adequate" level of personal data protection. This means that American Express and Microsoft, for example, cannot repatriate employee and client files to the United States unless they sign a contract agreeing to respect certain rules.

However, even a united Europe is having a hard time making its views heard, especially in the United States. Shortly before the directive entered into force on October 25, 1998, Washington was still defending the principle of "self-regulation." The deadlock between the U.S. Federal Trade Commission and the European Commission dragged on for two years. Eventually, in July 2000, both parties signed the "safe harbor"accord,which quietly entered into force on November 1. According to the agreement, to keep trans-Atlantic data flowing, companies must agree to observe the European directive's basic principles and to accept sanctions if they don't. The United States, Hungary and Switzerland have received the EU's "clean country" label.

However, the measure is not to American companies' liking. So far, just seven businesses have joined safe harbor! French legal expert Etienne Drouard,who is following the issue for the CNIL, doubts it will be successful:American companies "consider the agreement as a relinquishing of national sovereignty!" he says. But the whole issue may crop up again this year, because Washington is showing signs of taking a harder line on privacy. After the Amazon and DoubleClick scandals (see box) among others, privacy has become a hot political issue. The new congressional members had barely taken their seats when several of them put forward bills on the matter. Apparently, free-market America is coming up against its citizens' increasingly fierce resistance. ■

Did you know...
In a survey of the 100 most popular sites in their respective countries, 92% of the U.S.-based sites placed at least one cookie while 47% did so among the EU-based ones. 80% of those in the U.S. and 72% in the EU collected some form of information.
http://www.consumersinternational.org

The dot.bomb syndrome

Everyone agrees that privacy is good for business. But is there a market for companies offering to protect it?

EVAN HENDRICKS

EDITOR/PUBLISHER OF PRIVACY TIMES, BASEDIN WASHINGTON DC

While several firms have recently suffered class-action lawsuits and public outrage over apparent intrusions into customers' personal data, American Express is one of a number of businesses that may be blazing the right path from privacy to profits.

Last year, the credit card issuer rolled out "Private Payments," enabling its customers to go online and obtain "Disposable" credit card numbers that could be used for only one online purchase. If the number was ever stolen after being used for a purchase, it would be worthless.

A key lesson is that protecting privacy, in this case the credit card number, became an "enhanced value" to an existing service. Moreover, American Express understood that the credit card number was the "tip of the privacy iceberg"—it plans to roll out a suite of related services, like anonymous Internet browsing, in 2001. Rival companies, like Visa/Mastercard,are following the same trail.

Another company to watch is PrivaSys, of San Francisco, which has patented technology to enable plastic credit cards to generate disposable numbers for each purchase. PrivaSys does this by equipping the card with a calculator-styled key pad and LCD screen, a very thin battery, and a special magnetic stripe. The cardholder punches a 4-digit PIN into the credit card itself and—*voilà!*—the card generates the disposable number.

© Jean Lecointre, Paris

But securing payments is just one part of an emerging privacy protection market. Other firms are offering anonymous or "pseudonymous" browsing tools, packages to control cookies—the strings of code that are planted on the user's computer by websites—and services to block hacker intrusion. Only time will tell which companies will control niche markets or achieve critical mass.

What's clear is that the nascent e-commerce industry badly miscalculated the importance of privacy to their business model. For without privacy, there was no consumer confidence, and without such confidence, e-commerce had no chance of fulfilling the short-term, high expectations that initially sent their stock values soaring. The current shake-out of the "dot.bomb" industry shows how costly this miscalculation over privacy was.

An added but essential value

But if you thought privacy was a big issue for e-commerce, consider the debate on the wireless industry. Referred to as Mobile or M-commerce, this industry appears to have unlimited potential to deliver information and location-based services, advertisements, and discount coupons to cellular phones and hand-held wireless devices. M-commerce risks hitting the major "privacy buttons": constant surveillance via location-based tracking; unsolicited ads clogging communications devices; detailed profiles of individuals' interests and movements;and insecure payment mechanisms.

Nonetheless, the industry is showing signs that it has learned from the mistakes of e-commerce. A few months ago at a workshop of the U.S Federal Trade Commission, leading wireless industry groups unveiled guidelines requiring companies to obtain a consumer's consent before collecting or using personal data. This wasn't altruism: the industry understands that consumers will not tolerate commercial services to their cell phones unless they explicitly consent.

So far, privacy's brief tenure in the commercial marketplace indicates that some people are willing to pay extra to protect their privacy. But the more important lesson is that consumers are unlikely to take more than a few extra steps to secure their data. If they perceive that a given medium, like the Internet, is not privacy-friendly, they either change their habitual uses or actually refrain from them altogether.

The likelihood is that privacy will become an "added value," creating a market for those who can integrate privacy into payment mechanisms without excessively burdening the consumer. ■

The quiet revolution

From Guatemala to Kosovo, human rights groups have taken a page out of a spy thriller by learning the art of encryption

SUELETTE DREYFUS

AUSTRALIAN JOURNALISTAND AUTHOR OF UNDERGROUND—TALES OFHACKING, MADNESS AND OBSESSION ON THE ELECTRONIC FRONTIER (RANDOM HOUSE, 1997)

© Moises Castillo/AP/Boomerang, Paris

Encryption helped break the silence over Guatemala's "vanished" children.

A quiet revolution is creeping through human rights groups around the world. Don't expect to see noisy marches through the streets of Guatemala or angry protests in Kosovo, though both places are hotspots in the transformation. The revolution is running through electronic ether and human grey matter.

Computer technology, and particularly cryptography software (which uses secret codes to transform data into a stream of seemingly random characters), is subtly changing the balance of power between repressive governments and the human rights groups that watch them. From Cambodia to El Salvador, grassroots human rights organizations are embracing software that allows them to track government abuses and then hide their data in order to protect sources.

A driving force in this revolution is Dr. Patrick Ball, deputy director of the science and human rights program at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). For the past nine years, Ball has been discreetly travelling in the wake of wars and insurrections to train human rights workers in the science of information gathering. He has shaped and protected databases in places such as El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Ethiopia, Albania, Kosovo and South Africa, among others.

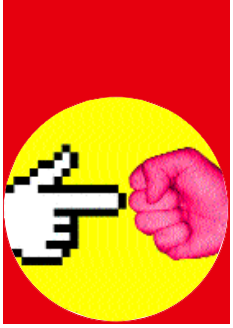
Crucial testimony under lock and key

When Ball first began this training in the early 1990s, most human rights workers were technophobes. Technology, used for so long as a tool of spying by repressive governments, was clearly the enemy. Every project was tough work, as Ball tried to convince people in the field to adopt increasingly cheap computer software as a means of deftly turning the tables on governments. About three years ago however, the climate began to change.

"Human rights groups are beginning to recognize the tremendous analytic power large-scale data brings to us and you simply cannot do that without technology," says Ball. While visiting groups in Cambodia who were learning to use this technology, I was struck by the enormous piles of paper on every desk. It could take two weeks to extract one simple figure, such as how many rapes were reported in Cambodia in a month.

Cheap computers and, more importantly, easy-to-use software programmes are changing that, says Ball. Database, spreadsheet, word processing and communications programmes have made it possible for even small organizations to track abuses with scientific rigour.

This analytic precision makes a powerful weapon. It also makes a logical target for political opponents. Witnesses often risk life and limb when they come forward to report an abuse committed by ▶



the government. As a result, "human rights groups are using cryptography in the field to secure databases, investigations, field reports and witness identities—all data that might put somebody's security or liberty at risk," Ball says.

In fact, encryption played a key role in breaking the silence born from 36 years of terror and civil war in Guatemala, which killed more than 100,000 people, most of them Mayan Indians. Until recently, most Guatemalans would have been shocked by the fact that the following testimony was publicly documented: "My sister went shopping in Rabinal, but when she got to the hamlet of Plan de Sanchez the army was already there. There they grabbed her and raped her in a house. There were fifteen girls raped and then they were riddled with bullets. Afterwards, they were buried by the people in a clandestine cemetery."

New flashpoints in the crypto-wars

This personal account, from a report by AAAS and the International Center for Human Rights Research (CIIDH) in Guatemala City, was one of many given by witnesses who wanted their names kept secret for fear of retribution. The CIIDH and several partner organizations gathered more than 5,000 testimonies between 1994 and 1995.

CIIDH was one of the first human rights groups in the world to secure its database by using PGP, now the most popular cryptography software in the field. Workers smuggled laptop computers and solar panels into remote mountain areas where they spent months scouring the region by foot and mule to gather testimony from people forced to hide from the military. They systematically burnt every paper trace of their work and encrypted the data before sending it back to the capital for analysis. They later emailed PGP-encrypted copies of the material overseas to a safe back-up site.

Guatemala remains one of the best examples of how a human rights community embraced technology, according to Ball. They continue to use security software to protect the identities of witnesses as well as the integrity of the data—to ensure that political opponents don't sneak into databases to corrupt the information and discredit the group's work.

Nevertheless, "some groups choose not to use cryptography because hiding their work would make the government consider them a national security threat," says Ball. "I don't really think that any of the human rights groups is a security threat. They may embarrass certain military or police officials who have committed atrocities, but all the groups I know are dedicated to their country's democratization and civil liberties"

Throughout the 1990s, the U.S. government and activists fought a political war over the right to use and to share strong cryptography with the rest of the world—a war that Ball says has now finished in the U.S. "At the end of the day," he says, "the U.S. government decided the economic and civil liberty costs of regulating crypto were greater than the rather shrill claims made by law enforcement and national security officials," who maintained that the tools would assist criminals and terrorists.

While he has not seen any crypto-wars waged in the countries where he has worked, there are still places that either control the use of cryptography or are hoping to do so in the future. According to Ball, "the war front in the fight for widespread human rights access to crypto is currently in North Korea, Iran, Vietnam—and the UK." To avoid this battle, many groups don't admit to using encryption. Why advertise the fact that a computer screen of seemingly random characters can be transformed into witness reports of killing and torture? ■

The report, State Violence in Guatemala, 1960-96: A quantitative reflection**, can be found at: http://hrdata.aaas.org/ciidh**

THE TRUTH ABOUT HAITI

The revolution in human rights work isn't just about securing data, it's also about uncovering and analyzing the right information. A case in point is Haiti's Truth Commission, which has worked with Dr. Ball since 1995. After conducting about 5,500 interviews, the commission documented more than 18,000 reported human rights abuses before analyzing the data to determine the truth about what happened in Haiti under military rule, specifically in 1993-94.

"When we took a list of all the people who were killed and made a graph of it, we saw that political murders bunched up in a couple of different points in time," says Ball. When the team timelined the data against other events, they discovered a surge in human rights abuses at the same time as a U.S. troop carrier entered the waters around the island—a possible first step to military intervention.

"What was interesting is that a lot of apologists for the Haitian regime had argued that this violence in the streets was just nationalist fever—that it was really the fault of the U.S. by threatening to intervene. But over time, you see the same fights all over the country implying a kind of coordination of those who were committing the terror," says Ball. "You also wouldn't expect detention by state authorities to increase at the same time as extortion by paramilitary organizations."

The most logical conclusion, says Ball, was that Haitian paramilitary groups created state-sanctioned terror in the streets to intimidate and dissuade Haitian society from calling for U.S. intervention and the restoration of President Aristide. ■

Forsaking genetic secrets

For fear of losing their jobs and health insurance, many Americans are chosing not to learn of their own "secrets" by foregoing genetic testing

AMY OTCHET

UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST

Julie Sando's lifeline, her family.

© Julie Sando

"About five years ago, my mother started acting bizarre: telling secrets and lies. She was only 59 but she began falling down a lot and her eyebrow would twitch uncontrollably. The day after I found out she had Huntington's I went to the library because I knew nothing about the disease. I remember standing there, my two young boys playing at my feet, as I went through the medical jargon to find out three things: first, there is no cure—my mother is going to die; second, her children—my brother, two sisters and myself—have a 50 percent chance of inheriting the gene causing the disease; and third, our kids are at risk."

"I knew that I had to keep this secret—from everyone but my family. I went on the Internet where I found a kind of underground Huntington's community—they told me about the genetic test for the disease but warned me to be careful. After hearing the stories about people losing their jobs and medical insurance, I decided not to test."

Julie Sando is not alone in the U.S. Many people are protecting their genetic secrets by foregoing intimate knowledge about themselves and their families. Indeed fear of genetic discrimination is cited as the major reason why about one-third of people approached by the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI) refuse to participate in testing, according to Barbara Fuller, senior policy advisor. After geneticists first identified the gene linked to Huntington's in 1993, they predicted that they would eliminate the disease in a generation. Yet only 15 to 25 percent of eligible people in the U.S. have undergone testing. To grasp the emotional stakes embedded in these genetic secrets, Julie Sando recounts her experience.

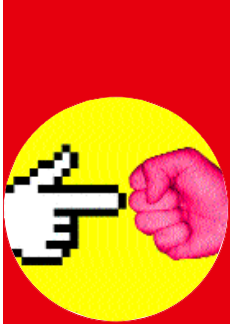
A hazy view of genetics as a window on the soul

"I waited four and a half years to have a test. Not one day went by that I didn't think I saw a symptom of the disease—I'd see my hand twitch or just stumble over my words. Every time, I asked 'is that it?' I couldn't stand the mental anguish of not knowing if my kids had the disease. It was time to face it… There are two ways of testing: either go through your insurance and put it on record or stay anonymous and pay out of pocket (about $1,000). We didn't have the cash so I took the ultimate risk."

To protect patients like Julie, about 75 percent of the states have passed laws, mostly in the last five years, to protect the confidentiality of genetic information. A new set of federal regulations to reinforce medical privacy in general is supposed to apply in 2003, but the new administration may re-open the debate.

Yet some studies suggest that fear of genetic discrimination overshadows the actual number of cases documented. A major survey of health insurance regulators, company representatives, agents and genetic counsellors from seven states was published at the end of 1999 to compare the impact of genetic privacy legislation. According to one of the authors, Mark Hall, a professor at Wake Forest University School of Medicine, "we didn't find a single well-documented case of discrimination." On the contrary, he reported that a person with a serious but asymptomatic genetic condition faces little or no difficulty in obtaining health insurance. The reason, Hall says, is that insurance companies assume people will change jobs and therefore policies every two to five years. So by the time a client actually requires treatment, it is likely that he or she will have moved on to another insurer.

But as critics point out, though this may be the case for a 35-year-old woman genetically ▶



predisposed to breast cancer, what about a woman at the age of 50? As genetic tests become more accurate and accessible in the next few years, "I cannot think of a reason why underwriters would *not* use them," says Fuller of the NHGRI. Hence Julie Sando's expression, "I took the ultimate risk." By notifying her insurer, she may have put her children at risk of being denied coverage in the future (see box).

"At the first appointment," recalls Julie, "the geneticist asked all kinds of questions: 'who will you tell about the test and why?' But the real kicker was, 'Do you have nursing home insurance?' I was 35 and asked if that wasn't far-fetched. The response was a dead, 'No.'

"At the next appointment, they took my blood. The two months' wait for the result were the hardest in my life. On January 22, 1999, I got up early with my husband and we prayed. The wait at the hospital seemed like forever. The doctor wasn't smiling when he led us into a room and there were tissue boxes everywhere. Finally he said, 'You don't have the gene and neither do your children. But that doesn't change anything for your siblings.' I felt like a zombie. It took a year to get over survivor's guilt.

"I'm the only one in the family who has gone for a test. I recently asked my sister what keeps her from going. She said, 'I've a friend who tested negatively for the disease but her company found it in her files and they let her go. I have a sick husband. How would we live if I lost my job and our insurance benefits?'"

While recognizing the threat of discrimination, some experts like Dorothy Wertz of the Shriver Center (a research organization) wonder whether public fear may be tinged by confusion over genetics and the notion that "we are the sum of our genes," which pervades popular culture. For many people, test results are seen as windows onto our souls, says Wertz. Not only are we powerless to alter this information, but it may be used against us. Hence the gut instinct to preserve "genetic privacy" at all costs.

Yet this notion of "genetic privacy" doesn't make sense biologically. For example, many of the state laws offer special protection for genetic testing of a disease like Huntington's. Yet an ordinary cholesterol test can reveal a great deal about family history like predisposition to heart disease.

"I waited four years to have a test. Not a day went by that I didn't think I saw a sign of the disease."

"The state laws are good faith efforts but may offer a false sense of security," says Thomas Murray, president of the Hastings Center for Bioethics. "It is dishonest to assign genetics special moral status," he says, because most common and serious conditions are a complicated mix of genetic and non-genetic factors.

Julie agrees that the solution lies in protecting medical, not just genetic, privacy. Yet this does not rule out the need for laws to prevent genetic discrimination, according to patient rights advocates like Joanne Hustead, director of the non-profit National Partnership of Women and Families. "This is the new frontier of civil rights—which is about protecting people from discrimination on the basis of immutable and very personal characteristics, like race and religion. There is also a bit of self-interest involved," she says. "Everyone has genetic mutations and the moment that you start making decisions on the basis of one mutation or another, there is no end to it. We are all at risk." ■

No one is compelled to show to others more of his inner life than he feels is natural to show.

Albert Schweitzer, French missionary and theologian (1875-1965)

THE LUXURY OF INSURANCE

Unlike the universal healthcare systems of Canada or France, most people in the U.S. rely on their jobs for access to health insurance. Either employers negotiate competitive deals with the major insurance companies or they actually pay for their workers' medical services. Employers are increasingly (55-65 percent) opting for the latter option because of tax benefits. However, their employees risk paying a high price in terms of privacy. As medical records become incorporated into electronic databases, employers may increasingly identify "expensive" workers: those suffering from or predisposed to a serious condition. Moreover, these employers are exempt from state insurance regulations protecting genetic information.

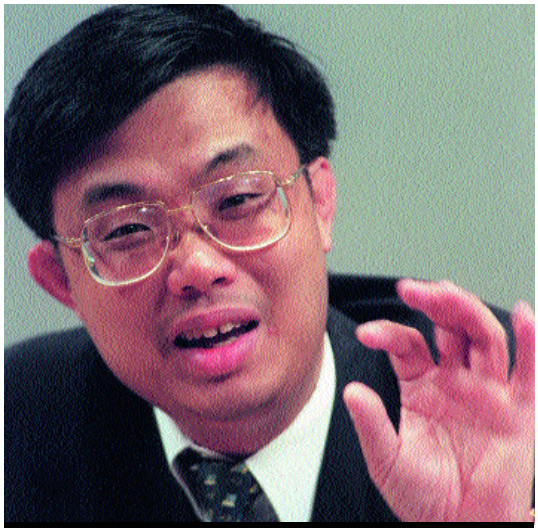
Individuals can also apply directly to insurance companies. However, most policies are "rated": different customers pay different costs according to their health risks and family histories. So it may be only a matter of time before genetic tests are used in the screening process. ■

A tireless troubleshooter

A renegade legislator introduces Hong Kong to the "luxury" of privacy

GLENN SCHLOSS

JOURNALIST FORTHE SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST IN HONG KONG



© Wan Kam-yan/South China Morning Post, Hong Kong

James To:bugged by surveillance.

James To is convinced his telephones are tapped. A policeman tipped him off but To feels neither paranoid nor outraged, simply resigned. For the past ten years, he has relentlessly monitored the surveillance tactics of Hong Kong's rulers—British and Chinese—and phone-tapping has been on top of his list.

"My interest is very simple:it's about Big Brother. The government should have the minimum amount of information about citizens," says the Democrat Party legislator. "I don't want the government to be my friend.It should leave us alone and then we will have the potential to develop ourselves into what we want to be."

To's strong views were forged by experience. He was first elected at the age of 28 in 1990—a pivotal moment in Hong Kong's history when British administrators sought to reassure a population panicked by the 1989 violence at Tiananmen Square and the return to Chinese rule in 1997. The colonial powers sought to calm public fears by introducing a Bill of Rights to locally enshrine the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

After examining the much-touted law, the young To found little in the way of privacy protection, which was not surprising. "Even in the mother country, Britain,there is no Bill of Rights or mechanism to ensure privacy," says To, aside from jurisprudence. Ironically, it was a British lecturer, Raymond Wacks, who first introduced him to the concept as a law student at the University of Hong Kong in the 1980s. Since then, academic curiosity has become a personal commitment.

The colonial authorities paid little heed to To's warnings. But they could not ignore the European Union's threats in 1994 to prohibit its member countries' banks from dealing with their counterparts in Hong Kong without legal data protection. A year later, the legislature passed the Personal Data Ordinance. Once again, To uncovered a major loophole:the law did not apply to the Telecommunications Ordinance that gave the government extensive wiretapping powers. He introduced his own bill requiring a judge to oversee the process, but the British authorities rejected it.

Today his battle against phone-tapping covers wider ground. New laws permit the police to create an extensive DNA database by collecting samples from anyone suspected or convicted of a serious crime. Immigration officials are also spearheading efforts to install a national system of "smart"cards, embedded with microchips, to replace the paper identity cards. Residents must now carry these paper documents at all times and apply for identification numbers for the most banal tasks, like getting a phone line installed, visiting a residential building after hours or even booking a tennis court.

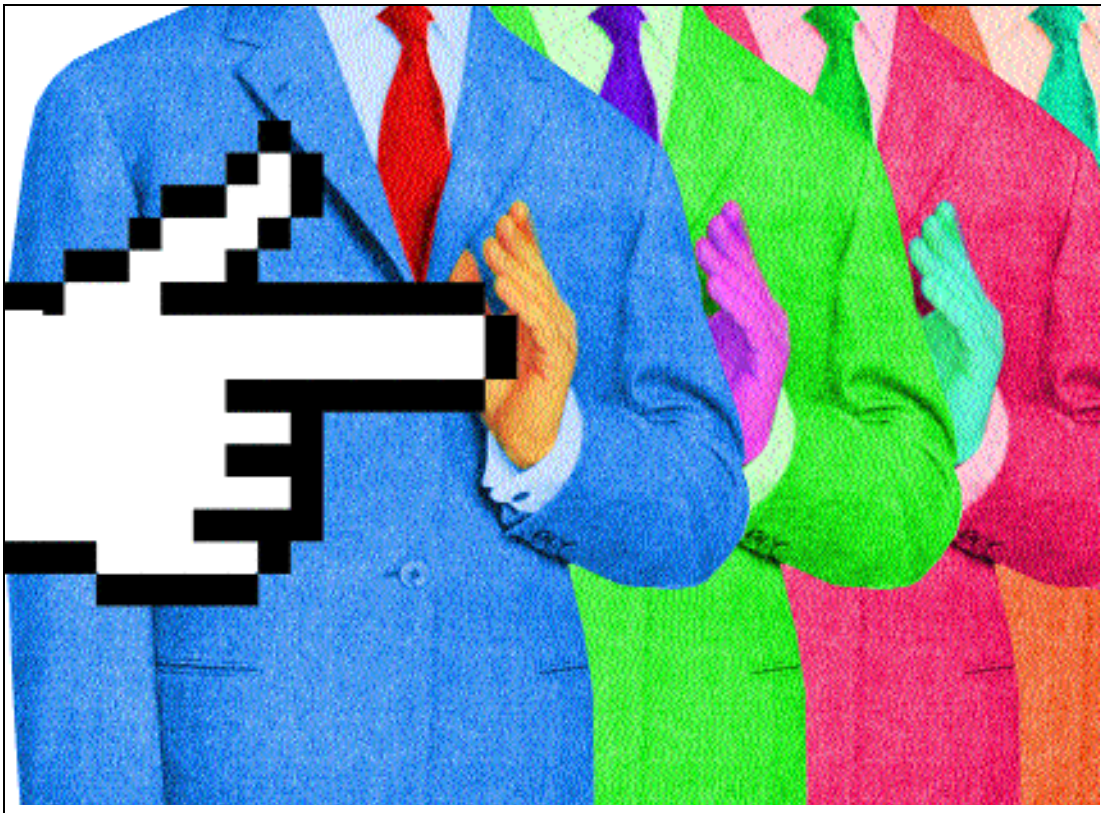
The omnipresent "smart" card

The smart cards are supposed to offer more efficient services, but privacy advocates fear they could do far more. By centralizing the most personal and minute details—from the title of a book borrowed from a library to medical data—any "card-reading" authority could use these profiles to exert leverage over the individual by, for example, passing sensitive information to an employer.

Yet as To pushes for legal protection, his fellow citizens seem uninterested. The entrenched habit of carrying identification papers, he says, has made surveillance seem normal in Hong Kong. People are willing to tolerate intrusion so long as it doesn't hinder their attempts to make money, according to the legislator. And if the situation becomes difficult,they are prepared to emigrate overseas. "Privacy is viewed as a luxury," he says. "It's not part of Chinese culture," which privileges the collective over the rights of the individual. But for To, the opposite is true: the well-being of the group depends on the security of each and every one of its members. ■

Don't you meddle with me, and I won't meddle with you.

George Eliot, British novelist (1819-1880)



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Labour pains: the birth of a movement

Cyber-rights and business groups are fighting a proposed cybercrime treaty. While there is strength in numbers, the groups' diversity may prove too much for the coalition to bear

DAVID BANISAR

U.S. ATTORNEY AND DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF PRIVACY INTERNATIONAL, A UK-BASED HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP

As you flip through the pages of this March issue, members of the Council of Europe will be poring over a blueprint to force its countries and others around the world to dramatically increase surveillance and invade your privacy in the name of preventing cybercrime (see box). An eclectic coalition of civil rights and corporate groups however, has launched an offensive against the proposed cybercrime treaty as well as a battery of controversial national laws and international standards.

Not surprisingly, the first privacy campaign emerged in the U.S., an Internet stronghold, against the infamous Clipper Chip. According to the government, this cryptographic device would have offered a standard for securing private voice communication. Two government agencies would have held the "keys," to be handed out only with "legal authorization." Privacy-minded citizens quickly saw the dangers of this in light of the federal government's history of illegal domestic surveillance. In 1994, 50,000 people—a hefty chunk of the cybernaut population—signed the largest Internet petition of its time against the proposal,which died soon after.

Perhaps the most striking feature in the battle to protect privacy has been the diversity of groups involved. The year 1996 saw a motley crew of immigration groups, gun-owners, liberals and conservatives band together to oppose legislation that would notably have extended wiretapping and allowed for more investigations of political groups. Irish-American and Arab-American associations joined out of concern that they would be more aggressively targeted in the "war on terrorism." Meanwhile, the fear of a more invasive government rallied gun-owners alongside groups from across the ideological spectrum. Once again, by tapping the Internet's power to organize and disseminate information, they shelved the legislation.

But this ad hoc co-operation is based on shaky ground. There was considerable coordination, for example, between civil liberties groups and the industry to oppose the 1994 Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act, which requires

telecommunications carriers to modify their equipment, facilities and services in order to comply with authorized electronic surveillance. Yet once the industry received a promise of government funding to implement the law, it quickly abandoned the coalition. Corporate representatives then jumped sides again and sued the government over implementation rules in a controversy that is still brewing.

Old enemies become new allies

With the Internet's growth, the privacy battle is becoming increasingly international. Most Western European countries have at least one cyber-rights group, a trend that is spreading across the continent and Asia, particularly in Japan. At the same time, existing human rights groups have also started to focus on the Internet. All it takes is for a single national government to ban free speech on the Web and the issue instantly takes on a global character.

For decades, international bodies like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Council of Europe and the European Union (EU) have been developing international standards relating to privacy, free speech and other civil liberties issues. Their work has included brokering common rules on data protection and encryption policy to promote e-commerce. While some government representatives have put a stronger emphasis on protecting human rights, economic interests have clearly dominated the debate, strongly influenced by the International Chamber of Commerce, a powerful lobby of industry groups. Today, by pressuring governments bilaterally and multilaterally, the U.S. is leading the efforts to expand surveillance worldwide. This pressure amounts to what privacy advocates call "policy laundering": by pushing other governments into accepting controversial plans like the Clipper Chip, international standards will be developed which will in turn force the U.S. Congress to accept proposals it had originally rejected.

To respond with more muscle to these trends, a new opposition front emerged in 1996: the Global Internet Liberty Campaign (GILC), started by the Electronic Privacy Information Center, Human Rights Watch and the American Civil Liberties Association. The group now represents over 50 NGOs from some 30 countries. GILC operates by consensus. Member organizations propose specific actions such as drafting letters to world leaders, releasing reports and holding conferences. Member groups then agree to join in the action.

GILC and groups like the Trans-Atlantic Consumer Dialogue (TACD) are making inroads into the policy processes. Perhaps the most tangible signs of their success are the frequent invitations to participate in OECD meetings. But the movement has just one foot in the door: the next step lies in strengthening the role of NGOs outside the U.S. The problem lies in the old Achilles heel of international movements: a lack of funding. ■

CYBERCRIME CONVENTION: ONE FALSE MOVE, AND YOU'RE A HACKER!

In 1997, a Council of Europe working group formed by law enforcement officials and interior ministers from select COE member countries, the U.S., Canada and Japan began drafting an international convention on cybercrime. Since then, the treaty has gone through 25 drafts.

Unlike similar actions at the OECD, civil liberties and industry associations were not invited to participate. The Committee met behind closed doors for several years and did not release a draft until April 2000. Instead of openly discussing the proposal, the COE asked people to submit comments via the Internet. Despite the hundreds of emails sent, only minor changes have been made to the original draft.

The treaty is extremely law-enforcement oriented, barely mentioning civil liberties, human rights or corporate interests. The basic premise is that behaviour is prohibited unless allowed. The first section creates broad new categories for computer crimes that could, for example, outlaw the development of basic tools to test the security of computer systems. The treaty also expands the definition of hacking to include violations of contracts and the terms of service posting on websites. One example: bypassing the main page (and the advertising) of a commercial site to reach an inner page would be a violation of law. Similarly, Internet service providers could be held liable if their users link to child pornography, even if they are not aware of it. Average citizens could even be held guilty for putting incorrect information on web forms to protect their privacy.

Governments would also have the mandate to enact broad new powers on wiretapping, real-time collection of traffic data as well as the search and seizure of information.

Most strikingly, the draft treaty fails to incorporate the COE's long-standing human rights protections. When asked publicly why the proposal has nothing on procedural protections for civil liberties, the chair said that it would be too difficult to come up with privacy standards, perhaps inadvertently admitting that the members of the panel knew very little about the subject.

GILC and industry associations led by AT&T and the International Chamber of Commerce have recently begun working together to oppose the convention. The companies are primarily concerned about the costs of redesigning systems and undertaking surveillance activities on behalf of governments. They also fear being held liable for the actions of their users or third parties.

Whether this NGO/corporate alliance will manage to overhaul or stop the treaty remains to be seen. Not only must they reverse years of secretive negotiations, but the unity of the groups has yet to be tested. Many companies sit on the opposite side of NGOs when dealing with the protection of consumers' personal data. ■

www.gilc.org/privacy

Shhh... they're listening

The journalist who first uncovered Echelon, a major electronic spy network, reveals how international surveillance touches us all

DUNCAN CAMPBELL

SCOTTISH INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALIST

Constellations of giant golf balls can be spotted in the most remote locations across the world, from China's Pamir mountains to the swampy north coast of Australia and atop tiny coral atolls in the Indian Ocean. Between 30 and 50 metres wide, these smooth, symmetrical white domes also loom among rice fields in northern Japan and the vineyards and mountains of New Zealand's South Island.

The clusters are the most visible signs of concealed electronic networks that watch the world. Each dome is filled with satellite tracking dishes that silently soak up and examine millions of faxes, email messages, phone calls and computer data that keep business and political affairs afloat. Unknown to the communicators, their messages are running through the domes, into computer networks and onto listeners who may be on the other side of the planet.

As the world has globalized and international communications have become central to human affairs, these listening networks have grown exponentially. They are part of systems called signals intelligence or "sigint," operated by a handful of advanced countries.

For many years, sigint networks were secret: discussion of their existence was strongly discouraged or even forbidden by law in the countries concerned. Now the European Parliament is seriously investigating sigint organizations and their impact on human rights and international trade. Europe is focusing on "Echelon," a system that relies on listening stations in about ten countries to intercept and process international satellite communications. Echelon is just one part of an immense network run by the U.S. and its English-speaking allies—Britain, Canada, Australia and New Zealand—known as UKUSA after a secret agreement that created the alliance in 1948. Little escapes the UKUSA network, which intercepts messages from the Internet, undersea cables and radio transmissions as well as from monitoring equipment installed in embassies. It even operates in space with a fleet of orbiting satellites.

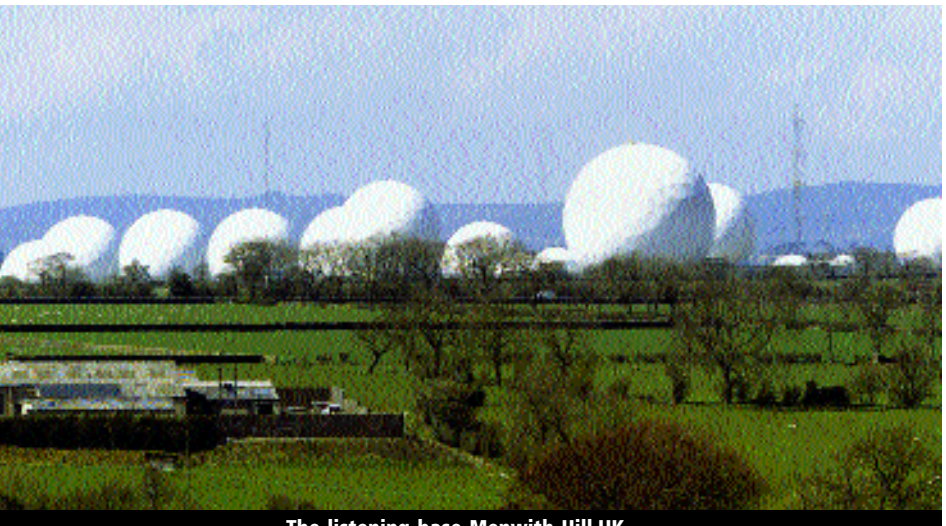
The history of systems like Echelon is as old as radio itself. The first international scandal over secret listening occurred in the 1920s, when the U.S. Senate discovered that British agents were copying every international telegram sent by American telegraph companies. Today's international networks were founded in the early years of the Cold War, when many western countries began jointly monitoring the former Soviet Union.

Fear not the word "bomb"

Who is listened to, and why? Officially governments only admit that surveillance is aimed at commonly agreed perils such as arms proliferation, terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime. But this is the tip of the iceberg. The main aim is to spy on other governments' diplomatic messages and military plans while collecting information about trade. In fact, in 1992, the U.S. re-adjusted its national intelligence priorities, specifying that 40 percent would be economic or "economic in nature," according to Robert Gates, director of the Central Intelligence Agency at the time. International and non-governmental organizations like Amnesty International and Greenpeace are also targets.

While UKUSA is the world's largest network, France, Germany and the Russian Federation have similar systems. On a smaller scale, so do countries in Scandinavia and the Middle East, including Israel, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. The budgets of all government sigint agencies probably add up to an annual expenditure of $20 billion, according to my calculations for a European Parliament report published last year.

Despite the extraordinary scale of Echelon and its sister systems, the press has mistakenly reported that the network could intercept "all email, telephone, and fax communications." Nor can it recognize the

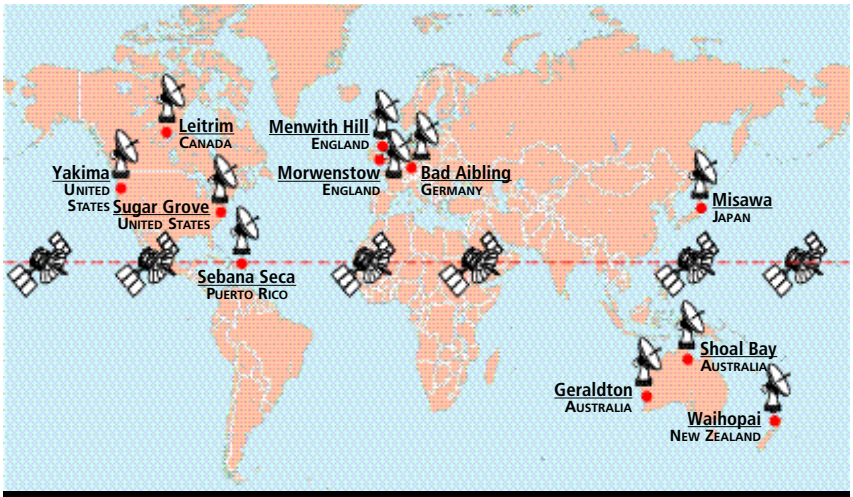


The listening base Menwith Hill, UK.

© Paul Bates/Reuters/maxppp, Paris

content of every telephone call. And it is pure fiction that by typing key words like "bomb" in an email, you can trigger a tape recorder in some secret base. For every million messages or phone calls intercepted, less than 10 will be used for intelligence purposes. Most personal communications are ignored except those of "important" individuals, like politicians, top business executives and their families.

The UKUSA network, however, does have the power to access and process most of the world's satellite communications and relay contents to client states. The system provides participating countries an enormous, unfair political advantage, since most developing nations cannot afford the expertise and equipment necessary to protect the privacy and security of their networks.



Little escapes the trawling net of Echelon.

Based upon graphics by Landesamt für Verfassungsschutz Baden-Württemberg

Spying on the goverment for the people

News about these systems began to leak out in the 1970s as U.S. intelligence agencies came under scrutiny in the "Watergate" affair, when former president Richard Nixon used electronic bugging against his election opponents. Since then, an increasing number of whistleblowers have revealed the scale and effects of sigint spying.

I first wrote about electronic spying by Britain in the 1970s. While completing a university degree in physics, I'd noted that the countryside was dotted with mysterious radio and satellite stations. In 1976, I uncovered the British dimension to the activities of America's National Security Agency (NSA), which had been revealed the previous year by Congressional enquiries. Officials were aghast that a sacred cow of eternal and indivisible secrecy had been slaughtered. Soon after the article's publication, my American co-author was deported from Britain as a "threat to national security."

The government then arrested me, along with another journalist and our source. The authorities didn't dare accuse us of espionage for a foreign country. Our "crime" was spying on the government for the people. Had the prosecution succeeded, we would have faced heavy jail sentences.

Over the next 20 years, official secrecy relaxed as U.S. Congressional investigations notably turned the spotlight on sigint agencies. In Britain in the 1980s, a controversial ban on trade union membership at the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) boomeranged by shifting attention on its spying activities.

The growth of the public information culture on the Internet has taken these developments a step further. Now, even GCHQ and NSA have websites to reassure UKUSA citizens that they are not targets. No such safeguards apply to the rest of the world: these citizens are by default denied the right to privacy. The countries intercepting their communications are free to use the intelligence for whatever they wish.

Such conduct violates the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Telecommunications Convention, which assures the privacy of international communications. Indeed sigint agencies trample over a long line of treaties.

While individuals probably never know that they have been spied upon, their organizations and countries may pay a high price for it. During trade negotiations, sigint agencies can sweep up the messages of a producer nation to discover their bottom line. Armed with such secret reports, the negotiators for the developed world can force prices down to a minimum. Several governments have recently begun targeting environmental organizations or those protesting unfair world trade.

Even when there are no direct adverse consequences, the mere existence of powerful surveillance systems can exercise a chilling effect on free speech, inhibiting political and cultural development.

As these activities have become more controversial, the U.S. has tried to expand its circle of collaborators. Countries like Switzerland and Denmark are currently building new satellite stations to gather and trade spy data with the U.S. But, as the ongoing European Parliament inquiry indicates, public awareness and concern are growing fast. Yet vigilance is not enough: if countries and peoples are to have equal rights in the global information infrastructure, concerted action must quickly follow. ■

Did you know...
Echelon may intercept as many as 3 billion communications per day (telephone conversations, email messages, Internet downloads, satellite transmissions, etc.), including 2 million telephone calls per minute. It sifts through approximately 90% of all traffic flows via the Internet.
http://www.echelonwatch.org

For the European Parliament report:
www.europarl.eu.int/stoa/publi/default.en.htm

For further information on the networks:
United States: www.nsa.gov
United Kingdom: www.gchq.gov.uk
Canada: www.cse.dnd.ca
Australia: www.dsd.gov.au
New Zealand: www.gcsb.govt.nz
Russia: www.fsb.ru
Germany: www.bundesnachrichtendienst.de

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Cameras in Newhill couldn't pick out the dancing Morrismen.

Videomania in George Orwell's homeland

Satirist Mark Thomas uses the law to sidestep the UK's ubiquitous surveillance cameras

JACK CHESHIRE

FREELANCETELEVISION PRODUCER AND JOURNALIST BASED IN LONDON

Brits may appear to be paragons of discretion but actually we're a nation of voyeurs and exhibitionists. For the past 25 years, the government and citizens have been installing closed circuit television cameras (CCTV) in the most banal places: train stations, buses, airports, town centres and even telephone booths. We have hidden cameras in the changing rooms of shops and parade before men in uniform with cameras tucked inside their police helmets.

George Orwell's homeland has the most surveillance cameras per capita in the world: one for every 55 people, according to a recent study by the University of Hull. In 1995 almost 80 percent of the Home Office's crime prevention budget went into funding new cameras. And the private sector now accounts for about 30 percent of the market, worth £150 million ($210 million) a year according to conservative estimates, and growing 15 to 20 percent annually.

In the words of former Home Secretary Michael Howard, "CCTV catches criminals, spots crimes, identifies lawbreakers and helps convict the guilty," yet there has never been an official Home Office assessment of the cameras' impact on crime rates. Only weeks ago, it emerged that the Scottish Parliament has no information on the number of convictions resulting from evidence gathered by CCTV. And yet, James Ditton, a professor at the Scottish Centre for Criminology, reported in 1999 that the 32 cameras in Glasgow city centre had produced just one arrest every 40 days.

Indeed the exponential growth of CCTV has been accompanied by rising crime rates and falling numbers of police on the streets. Crime rates doubled between 1980 and 1990 and reached an all-time high last year at 5.22 million, with violent crimes rising eight percent nationally. On any one night in London, a city of seven million people, only 300 police officers are actually on patrol, according to the Police Federation.

Sketches, lies & videotape

So let's scratch the crime prevention argument and return to the original hypothesis: an obsession with surveillance for social control—which seems only fitting given that the British don't have a legally enshrined right to privacy. But we do have data protection legislation, first introduced in 1984 and reinforced in March 2000, which gives citizens the right to see and correct personal information kept by anyone—government, company or fellow citizen.

I work with Mark Thomas, who spends a lot of time in front of and behind cameras for the TV programme, "The Mark Thomas Product." So in the spirit of public service, we have sought to uphold the new law. According to the guidelines, CCTV operators must register their activities with the government, which is good news because just about anyone can install a

camera anywhere. Quite logically, we made our first stop at a security industry exhibition. Of about 200 exhibitors, we discovered that 127 had failed to register and were therefore breaking the law. We invited them to the exhibition's cyber café to register online. Most declined and we were soon ejected from the conference but not before the organizers had drafted a letter to all exhibitors, notifying them of their legal obligations.

We then stumbled upon an interesting phrase in the act: "the same legally enforceable information-handling standards as have previously applied to those processing personal data on computer now cover CCTV." Translation: any identifiable individual filmed by a camera now has the right to obtain a copy of those images. This is a satirist's dream. If we are to be filmed half our lives, then we want the footage for a 40-year long out-of-home video. Perhaps this is the real reason for the new law: why else would it stipulate that operators put their contact information on each camera?

This took us to our next stop, Britain's privatized and chaotic railways. We figured that a lot of people were getting into trouble for being late to work. So we found several harassed commuters eager to act as guinea pigs by standing under their local station's cameras holding a half-metre high clock. All it took was a quick letter of request and each commuter received a personal video, courtesy of Railtrack, to prove to their bosses that they weren't the culprits—the company was.

The real surprise came while testing the latest CCTV hi-tech wizardry. Newham Council in London has spent £2 million ($2.8 million) on computerized cameras to automatically recognize certain vehicle number plates and identify known villains with facial mapping software. We sent six traditional English folk dancers, donning garters and bells, to do the "rattlebone" and "ploughjack" through the streets of the housing estate. Shortly after our visit, we received a letter explaining that the council couldn't release our footage since "it has not been possible for us to extrapolate your images from those of unknown third parties."

Announcing the world's first international CCTV competition

We had a major dilemma: had taxpayers' money been used for faulty equipment, or was something else going on? We happened to be outside a Ford Motor Company plant when a few union people distributing leaflets about a forthcoming strike ballot were suddenly threatened by employees. Ford complied with our request for the CCTV footage of the incident. But aside from a riveting view of the nearby car park, there was no sign of life. Another round of technical problems?

All of which leads us to the following conclusion: CCTV's potential lies in the entertainment field. As a result, we've launched a competition for the best footage obtained through data protection laws. None other than Jonathan Ross, the BBC's film critic, will judge the results. And perhaps most importantly, I hereby formally announce the creation of the new category, "Best International Picture." Any CCTV footage will qualify, edited or uncut, from countries with or without appropriate legislation. Please send your tapes marked "CCTV Competition" to Vera Productions, 3rd Floor, 66-68 Margaret Street, London, W1W 8SR, London, United Kingdom. ■

jack.cheshire@clara.net

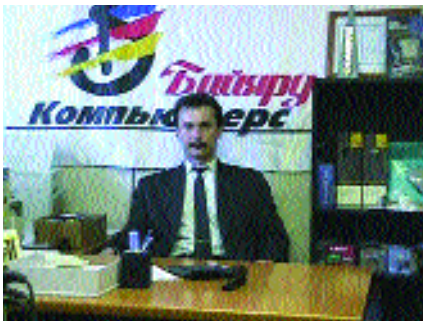
Did you know…

The CCTV market in the United Kingdom is currently the biggest in Europe at over $616 million per year, with 200,000 cameras in place. In 1999, 500 towns and cities had public CCTV systems, up from 74 in 1996!
http://www.indexoncensorship.org
http://www.privacyinternational.org

BSK, THE PROVIDER THAT SAYS NIET

In the USSR, the state has always had its nose in citizens' private business. Ten years after the fall of the Soviet empire, how closely are the Russians watched?

Of course, the communist party is no longer the almighty power it used to be. But old habits die hard. In 1998, the government decided to take a close interest in Russia's three million Internet users. By passing a resolution setting up SORM 2, (an acronym for a system of operative investigation measures), the secret services and the State Telecommunications Committee extended SORM 1 to the Internet. Since 1995, that system has allowed the Federal Security Bureau, the KGB's successor, to eavesdrop on traditional communications (telephones, telex, fax and so on), as long as it had a warrant.



© naïl_m@bayard.ru

So far, a single man has dared to challenge SORM 2. Naïl Murzakhanov, 34, is the chairman of Bayard-Slaviya Communications (BSK), an Internet access provider based in Volgograd (1,500 kilometres south of Moscow). "When the FSB agents came to have me sign their co-operation plan, I refused," he says. "My team and I went through the document with a fine-toothed comb and we came to the conclusion that it was illegal." Murzakhanov, who has a degree in robotics, explains that "we're not against all forms of co-operation. We'd be willing to go along in specific cases, but not systematically. For example, if the FSB brought us court documents proving that an individual is suspected of tax evasion or pedophilia, we could cooperate. But that has never happened."

Cut to the quick, the ministry of communications threatened to take away the rebellious provider's license. But in January 2000, Murzakhanov sued. The court has met three times. Each time the session was adjourned because the ministry's representatives failed to show up. The case dragged on. Then, in August, Murzakhanov received a letter from the minister himself, who withdrew his threat to take away BSK's license. "There was no longer a need to maintain our lawsuit," the young businessman says, frustrated at seeing the Russian government get off the hook so easily. ■

Anne Nivat, Moscow correspondent for the French daily **Libération**.

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Otpor: the youths who booted Milosevic

It took a generation of 20 year-olds without a manifesto or leader to shake Serbia out of its lethargy. Armed only with slogans and spray paint, they dealt a fatal blow to the dictatorship

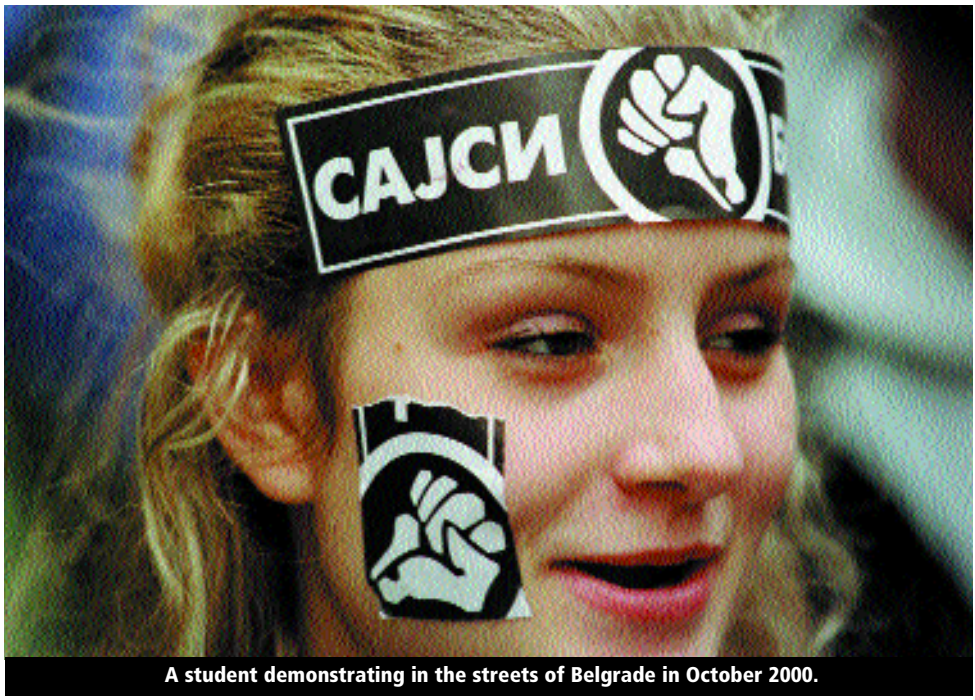
CHRISTOPHE CHICLET

French journalistand historian,
author of The Macedonian Republic (1999), and Kosovo: the trap (2000), both published in French by L'Harmattan, Paris

"Slobo, save Serbia:kill yourself," chanted a band of youth in the streets of Belgrade, Yugoslavia's capital city. Defeated in the presidential election on September 24,2000, Slobodan Milosevic—Slobo for short—kept clinging to power. On October 5,the dictator fell.

Opposition parties, international pressure and mass demonstrations contributed to Milosevic's doomsday. So did Otpor ("Resistance" in Serb), whose story is unique in the annals of eastern European protest movements. Without leaders or a clear cut political ideology, the group played a decisive role: like a termite colony, Otpor gnawed away at the regime's foundations before the top realized that the whole edifice was rocking.

Founded by a handful of libertarians in October 1998, Otpor counted 4,000 members by the end of 1999, a number that has swelled to 100,000 today. The overwhelming majority can't even remember when the movement was born.



© Kontos Yannis/Corbis Sygma, Paris

A student demonstrating in the streets of Belgrade in October 2000.

Vague memories of the war's early days

All it takes to meet them is a visit to 49 Knez Mihajlova Street, Belgrade's most stylish pedestrian thoroughfare, where anti-NATO demonstrators sacked the French, British, German and American cultural centres during the March 1999 bombing campaign. Otpor squatted an old, run-down Belgrade university annex there. In this tiny beehive of activity, covered with stencils of the resistance movement's famous black fist and jam-packed with files, leaflets and posters, initiatives were hatched that brought a 13-year-old mafia-ridden political system to its knees.

Sofia, Ana, Milos and Mihaïlo are between 17 and 24 years old. When a western journalist arrives, many of their friends in the office join in the discussion,held in a small, narrow room. Soon the tiny desk is cluttered with cups of Turkish coffee. Everyone serves each other and trades cigarettes in a good-natured atmosphere. The first observation is that all those present come from the same social background. Like most Serbs, their parents get by on $40 to $80 a month, working occasional odd jobs. Their grandparents, who still live in the countryside, send a little food to help out.

It doesn't take long for the conversation to switch to recent history. In 1989, nationalism of all stripes was tearing the Yugoslav federation apart. In June 1991, war broke out in Slovenia, spreading like wildfire to Croatia and, in spring 1992, to Bosnia. The Yugoslav army was made up of draftees, and an entire age group was mobilized.By the end of 1991,Belgrade's youth were in the streets, and the police brutally cracked down on the protests. Otpor's young activists only have vague memories of these events. Barely 10 years old at the time, they were living in a climate of war, deprivation and impoverishment.

On November 17, 1996, Slobodan Milosevic lost the municipal elections and annulled them. Tens of thousands of Serbs took to the streets in Belgrade and

other cities. Students, who spearheaded the protests, demanded that the results be recognized. Eventually, after three months, Milosevic made concessions and the movement ran out of steam.

Recruiting the disenchanted

Sofia Jarkovic, 17,is in her penultimate year at a Belgrade high school. She took part in these demonstrations alongside her parents. Their failure made a lasting impression on her, and on March 20, 2000 she joined Otpor, whose sole aim was Milosevic's overthrow. Ana Vuksanovic, 24,who is working on her master's degree in French literature, participated in every day of the 1996-97 protest marches . "The problem was, we had set our sights too low," she says. "We were demanding recognition of the voting results, when in fact we should have been demonstrating for new municipal, legislative and presidential elections, under the supervision of international observers. Like many people, I took this failure hard. That's why I joined Otpor as soon as it was founded two years later."

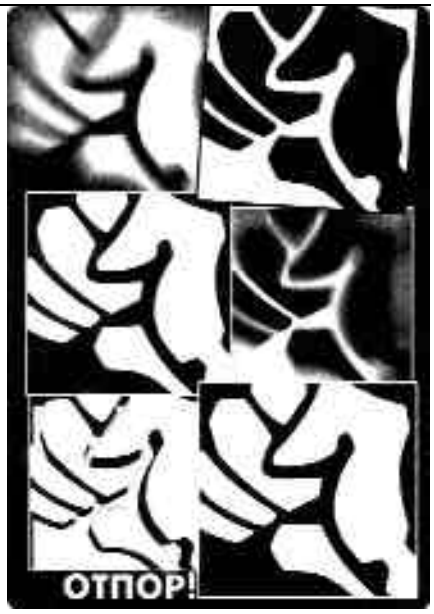
The movement got off to a quiet start outside Serbia's mainstream opposition. Milosevic had managed to corrupt several opposition municipalities while students had become disgruntled with politicking and established parties. The leaders of the 1996-97 movement went into exile, as many deserters and draft dodgers had done during the 1991-1995 wars. Soon, they were joined by deserters from the Kosovo war (March-June 1999). In less than ten years, several hundred thousand Serbs became expatriates. And most of them were the elite of pro-democratic youth.

The next generation found itself isolated. They had to come up with their own methods of struggle, forge their own experience, and above all, avoid selling out. These teenagers had political acumen, but more than anything else, intuition. And they wanted to stop a regime that was stealing the fire of their youth.

Armed with their impetuousness, they managed to shake their parents and grandparents out of lethargy. Adults started feeling ashamed of their apathy. Rather than stir up revolt in army barracks and corridors, they preferred to convince the people around them. Police manuals had no chapters on how to stifle the awakening of civil society. Meanwhile, Milosevic, shut up in his ivory tower, was incapable of sensing the agitation that was about to sweep him off the stage.

"What got me excited was that there weren't any leaders, so there was no risk of being betrayed."

One of Otpor's greatest strengths lay in its absence of hierarchy, a rule of thumb for a movement grounded in joyous anarchy. It's a free-wheeling, anything-goes protest movement. "I showed up at their headquarters on March 20, 2000," recalls Sofia Jarkovic. "I was a little scared. I opened the door and said, 'Hi, my name is Sofia and I want to be an activist.' They handed me a membership form. I filled it out and left. Two weeks later, they called me up, gave me an appointment and I joined." Milos Stankovic, 17,is in his penultimate year at a Belgrade high school and has belonged to Otpor since February, 2000. "I joined Otpor because it was against political parties," he says. "I wanted to help change things, because I couldn't stand seeing people dealing with so many problems in their day-to-day lives anymore." Ana Vuksanovic adds, "What got me excited was that there weren't any leaders, so there was no risk of being betrayed."



© Otpor

Within a year, the movement took root in four Belgrade universities, mostly with first and second-year students. The hard core consisted of three small groups: Democratic Students, the Students' Union and the Students' Federation. Otpor forged relationships with *Nezavisnost* (Independence), Serbia's only free trade union, as well as with the defence workers' union and the pensioners' organization. There were no ulterior political motives for these choices. It was just that the kids had parents in these organizations. That's vintage Otpor.

Sowing revolt in the family

Milosevic took a harder line after losing Kosovo in June 1999, but graffiti calling for "Resistance until Victory" began flourishing on walls. Slogans were increasingly disrespectful and, therefore, incomprehensible for rank-and-file militiamen and their leaders (see box). Some 100,000 copies of the newsletter *Serb Resistance* were secretly circulating. During school vacations, university students, joined by many high school and even junior high school students, sowed the seeds of revolt in their families, neighbourhoods and villages. Otpor infiltrated the provinces. The democratic termites were at work.

They scored a major success when they went after the sacrosanct Yugoslav army. Activists held demonstrations in front of military tribunals every time a ▶

© Otpor

"Because I love Serbia."

deserter went on trial. Adults, who had lost so many children on the Croatian and Bosnian fronts, could only be deeply moved. Otpor was changing mentalities. The teens struck a painful nerve, without ever resorting to violence. The police were baffled by this type of protest movement. In one year, they arrested 60 people for spraying graffiti or wearing badges with the black fist, but balked at beating up the kids, who were the same age as their own children.

Sofia took part in her first street demonstrations in April 2000: "One day, a policeman tore off my badge. But he didn't dare arrest me." Ana and her boyfriend, Branko, were expelled from their university dorm rooms for protesting, and her parents were summoned to the police station.

© Otpor

"We started from nil."

In July 2000, Milosevic laid the groundwork for a constitutional coup d'état and announced a presidential election for September 24. The divided opposition managed to cobble together an 18-party coalition, the DOS (Democratic Opposition of Serbia). At the first meeting, Otpor representatives solemnly offered their black flag with a white fist. They were not joining, but warning: Otpor will keep an eye on you until the final victory. No more wheeling and dealing.

The Otpor wave had risen. "I wasn't old enough to vote on September 24," says Sofia. "My parents were against Milosevic. My mother, Mira, wanted to vote for the DOS, but my father, Dragan, thought of abstaining. I talked him into voting."

The defeated dictator annulled the election results. The wave swelled, covering the whole country with the same graffiti: "He's finished" and "Slobo, save Serbia: kill yourself!" Provincial opposition municipalities, the DOS, trade unionists and veterans started talking to Otpor.

On October 5, all of them were ready. "That day, I dragged my father to the parliament building at 2:30 in the afternoon," recalls Milos. "I joined Otpor in front of the philosophy department at the university," says Sofia. "We stayed there until three o'clock before converging on the parliament. I was always afraid of the crowd the whole time." Ana adds, "With four boys, I was part of an Otpor group in touch with the DOS. Our job was to call on Belgrade's citizens to come out into the streets. We were among the first wave of protesters who occupied the B92 radio station, which the government had taken over. I couldn't sleep several nights in a row. I was afraid the government would launch a counter-attack."

Otpor could have disbanded on October 6, but, mistrustful of politicians, the movement decided to stay alert and uncompromising until democracy is firmly established. Mihajlo Cvekic, 18, is in his last year at Belgrade's vocational school, where his major is tourism. He became a member of Otpor on October 8 "because of their decisive role on October 5," he explains. "Before then, I didn't dare join because I was afraid of retaliation, but also because of my parents and grandparents, who were hard-core Milosevic supporters. Today, they feel ashamed." The teenagers have quietly instilled democratic aspirations into the minds of family members corrupted by nationalism.

"I'm as mobilized as ever," asserts Sofia. "I don't want to join a party. There's still a need for Otpor. I don't have a sense that any meaningful changes have taken place in everyday life." Ana adds, "I'm not afraid anymore. I've found an apartment, I feel relieved and free. I'm optimistic, but we have to be patient. Anyway, I want to spend my life in Serbia." "So do I," Milos chimes in. "Even though I know there won't be a brighter future for a long time to come." ■

Key dates

December 1989: Slobodan Milosevic elected president of Serbia.
Summer 1991: The Yugoslav Federation is dismantled.
November 1996-January 1997: Unsuccessful student demonstrations in Belgrade.
October 1998: Otpor is founded in Belgrade.
September 24, 2000: Milosevic loses the presidential election in Yugoslavia.
October 5, 2000: Otpor activists take part en masse in the demonstrations that overthrow the dictatorship.
October 6: DOS candidate Vojislav Kostunica is elected president of the Republic of Yugoslavia. ■

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

Otpor became famous because of its favourite weapon: caustic slogans spray-painted on the walls of Serbia's cities. The first, when nobody had heard of them yet, was the clearest and simplest, a kind of birth certificate: "Resistance until Victory." In December 1999, Otpor wished everybody a "happy new year of resistance." A few months before the events of October 5, "The year 2000 will be the one" could be read on walls everywhere. They were right. They also invented a new resistance measurement unit called the "otpor-meter." After the September 24 elections, the famous "Gotov je" ("He's cooked") became the slogan spray-painted most on walls, staircases and in bar restrooms. On October 5, when a bulldozer broke down the door of the state radio and television headquarters, the government's main propaganda mouthpiece, Otpor printed posters and calendars with the slogan, "A bulldozer-operator is asleep in all of us." Leery of all politicians, even if they belong to the opposition, Otpor's new slogan is, "We're keeping an eye on you." ■

© Otpor

Pirates and the paper chase

Book piracy is a thriving trade in poor nations, sometimes raking in bigger profits than the real thing. In Spanish-speaking countries, publishers and governments are stepping up their campaign to stop the scourge

LUCÍA IGLESIAS KUNTZ

UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST

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Tight budgets:a university student checks out a street vendor's offerings in Lima.

One of Lima's largest bookshops is on Amazonas Street. It sells books by Nobel Prize winners such as Gunther Grass, José Saramago and Gabriel García Marquez, along with titles like *Guía Triste de Paris* by Peruvian writer Alfredo Bryce Echenique, *Yo soy el Diego*, the autobiography of footballer Diego Maradona and *La fiesta del Chivo* by Mario Vargas Llosa.

This shop, however, gives no bills or receipts. When there are no classes in nearby schools, its vendors move to some other busy part of the city—a traffic-light intersection or even a beach. Its bookshelves are the pavement and its shop-window the road, for all the books on sale are pirated versions, copied and printed secretly without the permission of the author or publisher, and of course without paying any royalties or taxes.

Making a dent in authors' royalties

Usually the prices are three to five times lower than for normal books, although *El misterio del capital*, a popular work by Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto, which cost about $8 when it came out, was snapped up so quickly that its "clone" now fetches a higher price than the genuine version.

The business of plagiarizing CDs, cassettes, videos and computer software is thriving everywhere, but pirated books are found almost exclusively in poor countries. It is a scourge that threatens the whole Spanish-language publishing industry.

According to estimates from the Interamerican Publishers' Group, about 50 billion book pages are illegally reprinted every year in Latin America, ranging from photocopies to the reproduction of entire books. The annual turnover of the legal publishing industry in Latin America and Spain is about $5 billion a year, compared with the $8 billion of the pirate sector. This means a loss of about $500 million in royalties every year.

Carmen Barvo, a Colombian publishing consultant and leading expert on the subject, cites a particularly blatant case. "Even the book *Checkmate* written by Rosso José Serrano, Colombia's national police chief and a model officer for the whole country, was pirated and sold in the streets, proving that criminals don't care who the author is."

Pirated books these days are such good copies of the original that they are sometimes hard to detect, even by the authors and publishers themselves. Not only is the text copied, but also the design, the cover, the colour and the bar code. Pirated Argentine books made in Colombia or Brazil are ironically marked "printed in Argentina" while those in Chile shamelessly carry the warning that "reproduction is forbidden." Loaded into trucks and vans, they are exported from one country to the next, even making it to the display windows of genuine bookshops—perhaps innocently, perhaps not.

New technologies speed up the task

Those who support book piracy, by buying the forged copies for example, argue that the original versions are too expensive. As Barvo notes, the issue has to be seen in a social context. "Selling a pirated book is part of a vendor's daily bread. Today he may be selling books at traffic lights, but tomorrow it might be cigarettes, paper handkerchiefs or Barbie dolls. I don't regard him as the guilty party—that honour belongs to the person who produces the book and violates the rights of the author and ▶

publisher."

New technologies clearly make it much easier—and much cheaper—to pirate books. "Technically speaking, you can do it all these days," says the owner of a legal Paris printing works. "To copy a book, all you need is two copies of the original, a scanner, a computer with an optical recognition programme, some ink, paper, a small rotary press and a binding machine." With all this and a place to operate the printing press, a pirated book can be produced in two or three days.

Resorting to police raids and law suits

Attempts to fight book piracy through technology appear to have failed. All that is left are the weapons of police raids and the law, both of which are exploited to the full by bodies such as the Regional Centre for Book Promotion in Latin America and the Caribbean in Bogota and the Spanish Centre for Reproduction Rights in Madrid.

The strategy depends largely on legal action, says Manuel José Sarmiento, sub-director for anti-piracy and illegal reproduction at the Colombian Chamber of Books. "Since 1997, the Chamber, the publishers and the ministry of culture have stepped up their efforts, ranging from police raids to publicity campaigns in the press and on television." By January 2001, a total of 139 lawsuits had been successful in Colombia's courts, leading to the closure of places where pirated books were being produced, distributed or sold.

In Peru, on the other hand, pirated books continue to flourish, and publishers are denouncing the government's failure to act. Germán Coronado, head of the Peisa publishing house, says the country has "quite progressive legislation protecting intellectual property in accordance with international standards. Our 1996 intellectual property law punishes illegal copying with up to eight years' imprisonment and clearly supports authors by giving their heirs the right to receive royalties for up to 70years after an author's death.

"All this sounds wonderful and Peruvian technocrats turn up at international meetings to boast about it. But the law isn't worth the paper it's written on. The pirates have a bigger turnover now than the legal sector, and we reckon they sell nearly three times more books than we do."

Calls for lower sales tax and quality paperbacks

In Argentina, which has a strong publishing industry and the best bookshops in the region, "it's mainly technical and self-help books that are pirated," says Ana Cabanellas, head of the Heliasta publishing house, some of whose books have been copied. "It's very painful, like being raped. The pirates are very clever and however much we try, they always manage to make copies. Each year I publish a *Basic Legal Dictionary* written by my father, Guillermo Cabanellas, and we change the colour of the cover each time. Even that doesn't stop them."

As well as cracking down, publishers could make an effort to put out high-quality works in pocket editions, an area in which Spanish-language publishers lag far behind.

Governments could also help to boost the legal book sector by lowering the sales tax, which is one of the highest in the world (18 percent in Chile), or by building networks of public libraries where all Latin Americans can have free access to their favourite authors.

The task is huge, but so is the determination of some. "We're going to stamp out book pirating," says Sarmiento. "It's almost a personal thing for me. We'll get there." ■

A crime in many shapes and sizes

© Sherwin Crasto/AP/Boomerang, Paris

In Bombay, a young boy sells pirated versions of a science bestseller.

Asia is another continent afflicted by book piracy. In India, where the country's 11,000 publishers put out more than 57,000 new titles a year, an education ministry survey pinpoints three kinds of forgery. The most common is copying a book and selling bogus versions—the Indian writer Arundhati Roy and her book The God of Small Things **is one of the most recent victims. Another more laborious method is to print books ostensibly by famous authors but in fact written by clumsy imitators. A craftier way is to sell foreign books that have been translated illegally, without any formal contract. The famous young sorcerer's apprentice, Harry Potter, had just such an unfortunate experience in China. A few days before the legally-translated version of one tome came out, a version translated in Taiwan was selling on the streets. The state company publishing the book then printed the genuine version with green pages to distinguish it from the bogus one.** ■

PIRATES AND THE PAPER CHASE

Chile: a judge steps in

Are illegally copied books like forged banknotes and should they be destroyed? Judges, authors and publishers in Chile are all taking a stand in a heated debate

FRANCISCA PETROVICH

CHILEAN JOURNALIST

The basketball court in a Santiago police station was piled high a few months ago with over 150,000 books, galley-proofs and printing materials—all of them illegal.Seized in a series of police raids in three Chilean cities ordered by Carlos Escobar, a deputy judge of the Second Criminal Court, the collection marked the biggest defeat yet for the country's pirate book industry.

But these impounded books only created a new problem: what should be done with them? Judge Escobar took the initiative, ordering that they be distributed to the city's poorest neighbourhoods and other parts of the country.

"I did so because a judge is free to decide what happens to seized items, and if they'd stayed under court control, their condition could have deteriorated," he explained."Our country is poor and there's an urgent need for our children to read. That's why I think burning books is an outrage."

Just a bargain or the only road to reading?

The judge's decision sparked very different reactions. Most people thought it was a good idea. Some authors, such as journalist Patricia Verdugo—whose many books investigating the Pinochet dictatorship have been widely pirated—thought the judge was wrong. "What right does he have to give away things that don't belong to him?"she asked in an interview with the daily newspaper *La Tercera*."These books should be destroyed, just like confiscated drugs are destroyed."

Her colleague Hernán Rivera Letelier, a popular Chilean author translated into several languages, does not agree. Pirated books, he argues, are a way to reach more readers."I'm not siding with the pirates but with the readers," he says. "The people who buy one of my books in the street aren't the same as those who'd buy it in a bookshop. They're less well-off and can't afford the official prices." Not true, replies Bartolo Ortiz, general manager of the Planeta en Chile publishing house. "I've seen very elegant-looking people buying books on the street. I think reading is just less important for them compared to other things."

Whichever stance is adopted, one fact is certain: the publishers are going to appeal Escobar's decision.

The book was a third of the store price. I told the vendor it was a pirated version of Harry Potter. She nodded and asked me, "Are you going to buy it?"

During the year 2000, a total of 308,000 pirated copies of 400 books put out by various publishers were seized in Chile. "We reckon we lost $25 million last year," says Eduardo Castillo, president of the Chilean Book Association. "This country is top of the league in terms of pirated books."

The publication of pirated books in Chile grew out of the need for undercover political activity. During the 1973-89 military dictatorship, for example, the Chilean Communist Party published Che Guevara's diaries and other banned material. Various people recently interviewed in the book industry insist that certain unnamed employees of lawful publishing firms themselves deal out original copies of books to the forgers, obviously in return for money.

Bringing the government to heel

Castillo disagrees, noting that publishers have joined together to investigate, file lawsuits and gather evidence in an effort to punish the guilty. Pedro Bosch, a lawyer who works for Editorial Sudamericana, says that in two years of investigations, the firm has filed 60 complaints resulting in charges against 200 people, 50 trials and the seizure of over 30,000 books. "In this way we've been able to find out who the pirates are, build a database and curb the damage being done," he says. "But the market isn't going to go away."

Authors, publishers, booksellers and judges at least agree that the government has so far paid little interest in taking a firm stand against book piracy. They nevertheless hope an imminent report commissioned by Chilean President Ricardo Lagos from the Book Association may change all that.

Meanwhile, on a corner of Santiago's busy Avenida Providencia, a street vendor asks his assistant to fetch some more Harry Potter books. She goes off to get them from her makeshift storeroom, hidden behind an ice-cream cart.I was interested in one book and asked the price. It was $6, less than a third of the price in a bookshop. She said she sold between $35 and $55 worth of books each day.

The average monthly salary of most Chileans is about $625. I told the vendor it was a pirated version of the book. She nodded and asked me:"Are you going to buy it?" ■

Testifying from the front

Modern wars are fought with huge propaganda machines or through the rule of terror. How can a journalist in the midst of conflict decipher the truth?

SHIRAZ SIDHVA

UNESCO COURIER JOURNALIST

"The first casualty when war comes, is truth," observed U.S. Senator Hiram Johnson in the midst of World War I. Nearly a century and many conflicts later, technological advances have brought wars into living rooms across the world. But truth still remains the first casualty, buried under layers of propaganda, vested interests and fear.

Reporting from the battlefront has never been technically easier, with satellite phones and live news relayed in real-time. But this has only accentuated the dilemmas that journalists encounter when covering conflicts: authoritarian regimes and even democracies go to even greater lengths to conceal the truth.

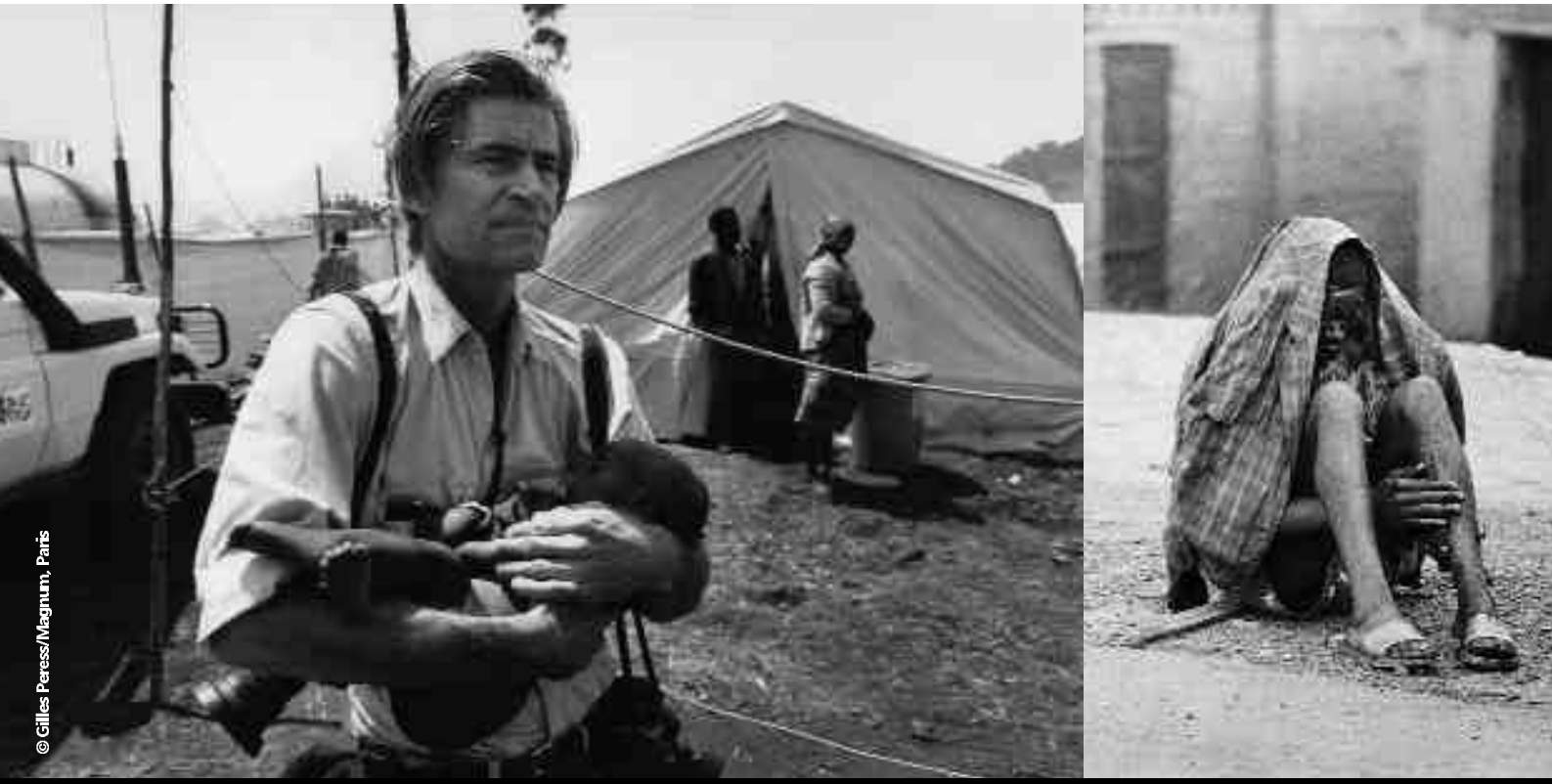
The last century has seen large-scale battles between countries give way to deadly internecine conflicts, often between governments and their own people. From Africa to East Timor, from Kashmir and Sri Lanka to the killing fields of Chechnya, Bosnia, Colombia and Sierra Leone, old ethnic hatred is rekindled, and wars are fought not on battlefronts but in the midst of civilian populations. According to Robert Manoff, director of New York University's Center for War, Peace, and the News Media, mass violence is so "universalized" that there are currently over 200 communal groups fighting political and military wars in 93 countries.

The media's role remains essentially to act as a messenger. Yet journalists also have the power to change the course of conflicts by influencing public opinion. "The outcomes of these small, post-modern wars may depend as much on how they are perceived as on how they are fought," writes Tom Gjelten of U.S. National Public Radio. Gjelten, who has covered major conflicts worldwide, believes journalists must recognize that their task is not to please diplomats or facilitate peace processes, but to describe a conflict as truthfully as possible.

Local journalists are prime targets

Do the exigencies of war justify a different set of ethics from those of peacetime? The principles are essentially the same, but for one major difference: journalists are more vulnerable in war. In Sierra Leone, East Timor and Chechnya, the bulletproof jackets that Western journalists donned provided little protection from the wrath of a killer squad or a vindictive soldier's bullet. For local journalists, the terrors are even starker. Yves Sorokobi, who coordinates the Africa programme for the Committee to Protect Journalists, recounts that ten reporters were executed by rebels in Sierra Leone over 21 days in 1999 (see box).

Reporting is also hampered by



© Gilles Peress/Magnum, Paris

Rwanda 1994: Magnum photographer James Nachtwey carries an orphaned baby to shelter while cameras zoom in on a suspecte

government restrictions on access to trouble spots. Since 1995, hardly any journalists in Sri Lanka have had access to the area where the government is fighting a deadly battle with the separatist guerrilla group, the Liberation of Tamil Tigers' Eelam. "We don't get anywhere close to the conflict," says Nirupama Subramanian, special correspondent of *The Hindu* in Colombo. Instead, both sides transmit their version of the news via contradictory press releases. "It is a fax war we are covering," Subramanian says. "There's no way of knowing the truth."

The proliferation of real-time news has made political control even tighter. Journalists often find they have little training for the choices they are forced to make in tense situations. When two countries are at war, whose "truth" should the correspondent convey—that of the country to which the journalist belongs or that of the enemy, whose version might be more compelling? For the writer and war correspondent John Pilger, it is exactly this "virulence of an unrecognized censorship, often concealed behind false principles of objectivity" that serves to "minimize and deny the culpability of Western power in acts of great violence and terrorism, such as the Gulf and Kosovo."

© Teun Voeten/Panos

d Hutu death squad member.

Powerless observers of unfolding dramas?

War reporting has nevertheless come a long way since the two world wars, when most journalism was an uncritical arm of the war effort. Twenty years later, governments learnt from Vietnam that unrestricted access to war zones, particularly with the advent of television, was potential political suicide. In his classic book *The First Casualty*, Phillip Knightley concludes that the freedom journalists had to operate in Vietnam "to go anywhere, see anything, and write what they liked is not going to be given again."

"In a democracy, you cannot get away with the crude authoritarianism of closing down newspapers or taking over broadcasters," writes Steven Barnett, senior lecturer in communications at the University of Westminster, reviewing Knightley's book. "You can, however, have a subtle mixture of information control, drip-feed propaganda stories about the enemy, cosy briefings for 'friendly' journalists and more blatant attempts at intimidation for the less obliging."

The British devised an excellent strategy to manage the media during the Falklands war in 1982—they denied access, except to "friendly" journalists willing to report defence briefings.

The Gulf War was the first in history where the public expected regular reporting from an "enemy" capital under siege. Fought mostly from the air, with attacks deep within enemy territory, it was impossible for international journalists to verify military information or report on Iraqi casualties. It was only later that the deceptions were exposed, whether it was Iraqis flinging premature Kuwaiti babies out of incubators (which turned out to be the work of an American public relations agency commissioned by the Kuwaiti government), or the filmed preparations for an allied landing on the Kuwaiti coast, which was never part of the military plan.

During the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999, the press was actively used to drum up public support. The pitfalls of instant news became all too obvious during the conflict. With 2,700 media personnel in the region when NATO entered Kosovo (compared with 500 in Vietnam at the war's peak), the war could have produced unprecedented free and fair reporting. But instead, the story behind the sound bytes was missing. "The public drowned in wave after wave of images that added up to nothing," writes Knightley.

Above all the clamour, however, several war correspondents have worked at great risk. John Burns of the *New York Times*, a Pulitzer Prize winner, spent more than a year in besieged Sarajevo, sharing many nights of terror with the local people to tell the world what was really going on. For such journalists, objectivity may have little to do with neutrality, especially when the choice is between hapless victims and perpetrators of genocidal crimes.

"You can have a subtle mix of information control, drip-feed propaganda stories, cosy briefings and more blatant attempts at intimidation."

For many reporters, the greatest dilemma comes down to how involved they should get. Often, journalists are overwhelmed by fear and helplessness, but are still called upon to provide the only link between a war-afflicted people and the outside world. "I couldn't stop the smallest part of it," recalled Lindsey Hilsum of the British news service ITN about reporting the massacres of Tutsis in Rwanda in 1994. "I could only watch and survive." Yet Hilsum decided to testify before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda. "It was not my responsibility, and testifying could even have compromised my role as a journalist,"

she explained. "But I also have responsibilities as a human being."

Courses at journalism school and professional guidelines drawn up by media organizations like the Freedom Forum are widening the debate on professionalism in war reporting, though most agree that the basic qualities needed are integrity and a good dose of common sense. Anthony Borden, executive director of the Institute of War and Peace Reporting in London, stresses the importance of engaging and valuing the work of local journalists, especially at a time when commercial pressures threaten the continued coverage of conflicts in regions not perceived to have strategic importance.

Given all the dangers, why do journalists choose to cover certain conflicts? It is unlikely they do it for fame or fortune, or as some people believe, for the thrill of it. Most reporters believe their writing will make a difference. The legendary correspondent Martha Gellhorn, who covered wars for nearly half a century, explained it best: "… in all my reporting life, I have thrown small pebbles into a very large pond, and I have no way of knowing if any pebble caused the slightest ripple. I don't need to worry about that." ■

Seeing is not always believing

In 1995, when the historic town of Charar-e-Sharif in the Kashmir valley was burnt to a cinder, army officials escorted busloads of visiting foreign and Indian journalists to see the devastation. To prove it was the work of mercenaries from Pakistan, reporters were guided to a courtyard to photograph five corpses they claimed were "foreign" mercenaries killed in a gunbattle with the army.

Journalists who returned to the site after the "guided tour" discovered that the bodies were not "foreign" at all. Five men from a nearby village had been arrested that morning and killed to serve the government's propaganda machine. Almost every Indian newspaper carried the photograph of the "dreaded Afghan mercenaries." Only one foreign news magazine published photographs of the anguished villagers grieving their dead that day. ■

www.ccpdc.org / www.cpj.org
www.iwpr.net / www.rsf.fr
www.freedomforum.org
Phillip Knightley, The First Casualty**, Prion Books, London, rev.ed. 2000.**

JIA KANGBAI*: REPORTING FROM DEATH ROW

Since it began in 1991, Sierra Leone's conflict between rebels and the government has claimed close to 30,000 lives while mutilating 120,000. Outside the warring factions, no group has been more targeted than journalists. Reporting involves a constant face-to-face meeting with death, kidnappings, torture and even long detention without trial.

Every Sierra Leonean journalist has a horror tale to tell of his or her experience in the field. I received my war baptism in 1995 while heading for the southern town of Bo to investigate alleged collaboration between government forces and Revolutionary United Front rebels. Barely an hour into the journey the convoy of more than 100 vehicles ran into an ambush. That was the closest call to death I have ever had. More than 75 vehicles lay in ruins and 36 people were killed. Those of us who survived were forced to tote the rebels' loot back to their base.

Many have not gotten off so lightly. Mustapha Sesay, who used to work for the Standard Times**, had his left eye permanently damaged by a machete while trying to flee the rebel invasion of the capital, Freetown, in 1999. The invading troops killed Sesay's deputy editor, Paul Mansaray, and his entire family in front of their home. Rebels went on to set the paper's offices ablaze and destroy five other newspaper offices. Both parties to the conflict, meanwhile, conducted house-to-house searches for blacklisted journalists, raising the question of whether it is necessary to prostrate one's life at the abattoir table for an objective report in a war like ours.**

Objective reporting was constantly on the mind of Corinne Dufka, a researcher with Human Rights Watch, during a visit to Freetown last year. "Don't the authorities know that you journalists are required to have every side of the story including that of the rebels?" Ms. Dufka asked while discussing the fate of a local journalist, Abdoul Kouyateh, who was detained for six months for having links with the rebels.

There is no official rebel-run newspaper in the country, and a balanced or critical article written about either of the two stakeholders (government and rebels) in the peace process is invariably interpreted as partisan reporting. Write an opinion piece or editorial lampooning the government for not honouring its side of the 1999 Lome peace deal and people will brand you a rebel. Give me a local newspaper, and I will tell you which government minister or official financed its publication.

In times of "peace," what you write and say in your report will be the bullet that kills you when the war intensifies. Most local journalists, especially those in the print media, have unfortunately contributed to this deplorable state of affairs.

In October last year, the pro-government Kamajor militia abducted and tortured me for three days. The whole episode was the machination of the country's defence chief and militia head, Sam Hinga Norman, who four days before my abduction had tried to bribe us into dropping a story of a clash between his militia and the army. A colleague of mine, who doubled as a militia informer, had leaked the story to his patrons.

We are now fearing a possible attack from the Kamajors, whose head we recently lambasted for alleged corruption. I have yet to see a local court which could pass a guilty verdict on the militia or security apparatus.

The few journalists who dare to file stories from this death row should be encouraged and highly appreciated. But they need to understand that no matter how important a story is, it is useless to risk their lives for it: war reporting is for the living, not for the dead. ■

***** Editor of **The Standard Times**, Freetown

© David Turnley/Black Star/Studio B. La Benerie

A shrouded Afghan woman and her daughter make their way through a war-torn district of Kabul.

Spôjmaï Zariâb:
a pen against a nightmare

The Afghan writer Spôjmaï Zariâb is haunted by bitter memories and deeply apprehensive about her people's future. Exiled in France, she tirelessly denounces the wars that have laid waste to her country, without ever losing hope. Each of her short stories rings like a verdict against the regime of terror imposed upon her compatriots, and against the humiliations inflicted upon Afghan women

Kabul, the Afghan capital, is now a desolate and terrorized city. But you knew it in better times.

I was lucky enough to live there when my country was starting to taste democracy, modernize, introduce reforms across the board and fight the feudal system that still prevailed in some regions. In 1954, dress rules were abolished. It was rare to see women wearing *chadors* (veils) in towns. Women quickly asserted themselves in all areas of life, becoming doctors, members of parliament, soldiers, parachutists and bus-drivers. They may not have represented a big percentage, but they were active in such a wide range of activities.

The university was mixed and the first primary schools teaching both girls and boys sprang up. In Kabul, you could find books of all kinds from around the world, translated into Persian. We lived free and fulfilling lives. We could hold public meetings, speak openly and set up political parties. Afghanistan achieved a kind of political and social stability after a long and turbulent history.

But this short period of great hopes came to a sudden end in 1973 with the coup d'état of Mohammed Daoud, which paved the way for communist rule and later the arrival of the Red Army.

© Martine Bertaud, Montpellier

"I had to accept that I might never see my country again"

Your short story, "Boots of Delirium," describes the Soviet invasion.

The narrator is a dying woman who witnesses Soviet tanks arriving in her village. She has one obsession: to keep the gate to her house firmly shut.But the soldiers break it and come in. The image represents the outright violation of a country.

The young woman,suffering from head injuries, becomes delirious. She wanders through the country in her imagination. Instead of bunches of grapes hanging from vines, she sees arms, legs and heads. The cows no longer give milk but blood. In the town,she approaches a group of children but sees they're wearing huge muddy boots like the soldiers. Their eyes have turned to stone pebbles, expressionless and inhuman. They stand for the lost youth of my country, young people turned into instruments of war.

In another short story, "Identity Card," you describe a teenager whose mother hides him for fear he'll be drafted into the army.

This story symbolizes the future of the country, which was subjected to a totally fabricated war. The two great powers of the time [the Soviet Union and the United States] made the country a battleground for their Cold War. The Afghans were just cannon fodder. Their trust was betrayed and their rage against the invader cynically manipulated. They became tools of ideologies that didn't serve their country's interests. This fratricidal war continues today and has taken on wider dimensions of ethnicity and language.

Did the Afghans have a choice other than siding with one of these camps?

Unfortunately those extremes were the only choice. But most people, the "silent majority," didn't join either camp. This was my family's case. For this majority, killing people on either side was equally horrendous, because it was always an Afghan who died. A nation is like a wall—each brick that falls off makes it weaker.

As a writer, what was your experience of Soviet rule?

The new regime banned the import and translation of all foreign books, even censoring Persian classics. Only Soviet books, translated into Persian by

A LITERARY JOURNEY

Born in Kabul in 1949, Spôjmaï Zariâb began publishing short stories when she was 17. "My father gave me a love of literature," she says. "He was a exceptional man. He never made me feel I was just a girl and never forbade me or forced me to do anything. There was no television when I was a child, and in the evening he read us poems, which I came to know by heart. My father would recite the first part of a poem and I'd continue to the end. I must have been about three or four years old. After that, Persian classical poetry greatly helped me on my literary journey. But the short story, my favourite literary form, is a Western invention I owe my love for it to foreign writers, especially Europeans and Americans."

After attending the Faculty of Literature and the Fine Arts School in Kabul, Zariâb spent a year studying literature in France. When she returned home in 1973, a military coup by Mohammed Daoud, the king's cousin, ended the constitutional monarchy and a series of conflicts began. Five years later, Daoud was murdered in another coup d'état, and in September 1979, President Noor Mohammed Taraki was killed by his deputy, Hafizullah Amin. Two months later, Amin was assassinated by Soviet forces. They installed Babrak Karmal in power and invaded the country in December 1979.

During the 10 years of Soviet rule, Zariâb continued to work as a translator at the French embassy in Kabul. She published her work in Iran and, despite censorship, through Afghanistan's only publisher and printer, the Writers' Union.

In 1991, when the situation was fast deteriorating, Zariâb moved to Montpellier with her two daughters. When the Taliban seized Kabul in 1994, her husband Rahnaward Zariâb, himself an eminent Afghan writer, joined his family in France.

Spôjmaï Zariâb's short stories—written in Dari, a variation of Persian which, with Pashtun, is the official language of Afghanistan—are crafted in a harmonious blend of simplicity, sparseness and poetry. Humanism and universalism are the two features of her work, which continues to draw inspiration from her native land.

Her collection of short stories, "The Plain of Cain**," won her many readers, as well as "*Portrait of a City on a Purple Background*," a theatre adaptation of her work presented at the Avignon Off festival in 1991. In the postscript of her book, "**These Walls That Listen to Us**," Michael Barry, a French expert on Persian literature, writes that "Spôjmaï, whose name means 'full moon,' is one of the three greatest Afghan writers of our time, along with the two poets, Khalîlî, who died in exile, and Madjroûh, who was assassinated."** ■

Tajiks, were to be found in the foreign literature shelves of bookshops. They seemed to have been written by machines, not people. That being said, there were also some very good books, such as those by Chingiz Aytmatov. I could never have imagined that deep in Kirghizstan, under such a regime, a writer of this stature could exist. His short-story "*The White Ship*" enchanted me. It said everything, indirectly. Aytmatov became a ray of hope for me.

When writers find themselves in this situation, they have to find literary techniques to convey their message. Fortunately, the censors did not quite measure up to their job. They didn't know much about literature and a lot of poets and novelists were published by the Afghan Writers' Union, which was very active and had a sizeable budget.

When the Soviet troops left, what did you think would happen to the country?

There are some historical moments when you simply can't predict anything. After all that had happened since 1973, we were still in for some surprises. Anything was possible. Nothing could be forecast. We missed opportunities to take quick and wise decisions to head off disaster. Now we've ended up with the Taliban, who know nothing about Afghanistan. They're religious apprentices who've been trained in Koranic schools in Pakistan from the youngest age. They arrived with a rage to destroy, to destroy everything.

I heard they burned all the vineyards and pulled up the pistachio-nut trees. Pistachios were one of Afghanistan's main exports. All the Taliban's actions are guided by one idea: to make the country completely dependent – no more agriculture, no more irrigation systems, no more economy, just a completly devastated country. With the Russians, it was the tanks. With the Taliban, it's fire. We had political fanaticism and now we've got religious fanaticism. And fanaticism of any nature leads to a kind of blindness.

You emigrated to France in 1991 a few years before the Taliban took over, having stayed right through Soviet rule. Why?

I didn't want to leave but Kabul had become too dangerous. The schools had closed because of repeated bombings of the city. At the time, my two daughters were seven and eleven. I have three now. I wanted to protect them for a while and I went to live in Montpellier. But I didn't intend to stay. I couldn't face applying for the status of political refugee and giving up my Afghan passport. Many times I went to the post office to send the application, but I could never bring myself to post it. But when my husband arrived in 1994, I realised all the bridges had been burned. I had to accept that I might never again see my country, my hometown and my house.

Do you have any contact with Afghanistan these days?

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A lost generation.

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"Dispersing a country is the best way to wipe it out"

We had friends there, but they've all left. So has my entire family. We stayed for as long as we could in the country. We always said that everything could change but they couldn't take away the country.

Are there ties between Afghan communities around the world?

There are some associations, newspapers and magazines. But such links are very hard to maintain. For one, immigrants don't have the money to keep in touch all the time. Also, Afghans don't have a long experience of exile. There was no Afghan emigration before the Russians came. We're a people very attached to the land, to our families. Now we're scattered all over the world—Europe, the United States, Canada, Australia and Asia. Most of the refugees don't know the language of their host countries. It takes them five or six years to adapt.

It's very tough being forced to look for refuge somewhere else in the world. The war's been going on for 20 years now. It's a lost generation. Six million Afghan refugees — it's a terrifying figure. Dispersing a nation is the best way to wipe it out.

How do you see the future of Afghanistan?

As I say, after 1973 all bets were off. This hasn't changed. No prospect seems more likely than another. But there's still hope.

One solution might come from King Zahir Shah. He's the only person who all the tribes, all Afghans, still listen to. But we have to move quickly. Time is running out. My country is losing another generation because children aren't getting access to education. And education is a basic right of all the world's children. Why should it be an impossible dream for Afghan girls? They're only allowed to go to Koranic schools, until they're about 10 or 12. And what do they learn? To recite verses in Arabic, a language they don't even understand. It isn't any better for boys. The lack of teachers, administrators and equipment has reduced schools to nurseries, without the facilities.

But people are organizing to provide minimal education services.

There are underground schools in Kabul. Mothers teach girls in their homes. It's a kind of resistance. You have to be very brave to do that because it's illegal and the regime cracks down hard on illegal activity. For example, a woman just has to be accused of adultery, by anyone, without any proof, and she is stoned.

How do the men—their husbands and their sons—react to this kind of punishment?

The Taliban control nearly 90 percent of the country. Read the latest reports of Amnesty International and the UN Human Rights Commissioner. They describe these atrocities. Not only have ethnic minorities been uprooted and persecuted, the entire population lives under the constant threat of sanctions and all kinds of punishment and humiliation. Most people who stayed in Kabul are those who could not afford to escape. So they obey the "laws" to survive, laws that are unimaginably absurd.

One example: I heard of one Afghan living in Pakistan who died. He wanted to be buried in Kabul, so his family decided to take him there in his coffin. When they reached Afghanistan, the procession was stopped by the Taliban. They wanted to check the contents of the coffin, since smuggling is common. They saw the corpse, but

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noticed the dead man didn't have a beard. It isn't obligatory in Pakistan like it is in Afghanistan. So the body was given 80 lashes as punishment. It's madness.

There's been an increase in religious fanaticism in many countries. Why has there been this radicalization of Islam?

The two keys to the rise of Islamic fundamentalism—whether in Afghanistan, Iran, Algeria or other Arab countries—are illiteracy and ignorance. They pave the way for a "poor understanding" or rather a total misunderstanding of religion. To add to these deficiencies, there's the gap between generations, and the deep divide between rural and urban people. Don't forget most members of the *jihad* (holy war) movements come from the countryside, where people generally distrust modernization and freedom, regarding them as a threat. In recent years, globalization and other kinds of progress that serve the political and economic interests of large industrialized countries have been imposed on these countries at a vertiginous pace. Perhaps the fundamentalists are trying, in their panic, to bolster their movements by taking an increasingly hard line. In any case, the rise of fundamentalism harms Islam because it makes it look like a fanatical religion, devoid of spirituality.

The horrors of war have inspired most of your short stories so far. What are you focusing on today?

Before being a writer, I am an Afghan, and I think that all Afghans today share the same concern—that the nightmare their country has endured for the past 20 years come to an end. That the country be saved from the discriminatory rule of the Taliban who are still backed by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. That Afghan women be rescued from the clutches of these religious lunatics. Before the Taliban,40 percent of teachers were women, a clear proof of their intellectual level. Now they are excluded from society. Their physical, intellectual and psychological plight is alarming. They're not allowed to consult male doctors. Worse still, many are being sold into sexual slavery in Pakistan.

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Dispersed for the first time: an Afghan refugee camp in Iran.

Never before have the women of my country been subjected to such humiliation, and never has Afghanistan gone so far backwards. What's left of my country? The land is destroyed and strewn with landmines. There are many thousands of widows, orphans and maimed people. The country is ravaged by war, cold, drought and famine. Millions of refugees live in camps, mostly in Pakistan and Iran,without any means of subsistence and in inhuman conditions. What I write, and will write can only be about these concerns.

INTERVIEW BY JASMINA SOPOVA

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